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MEMOIRS

OF

CHARLES MATHEWS.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

G. H. Harlow pinx^t. [illegible] sculp.

MR MATHEWS.

Studying four of his most celebrated Characters

[illegible]

London, Published by Richard Bentley [illegible]

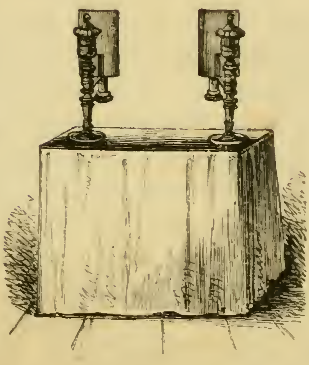
MEMOIRS

OF

CHARLES MATHEWS,

COMEDIAN.

BY MRS. MATHEWS.



" A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."—DRYDEN.

" Proteus for shape, and mocking-bird for tongue."

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1838.

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MEMOIRS

OF

CHARLES MATHEWS.

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Re-opening of the Haymarket Theatre.—Mr. Bannister, jun.—Mr. Mathews in *Croaker.* — Illness of Mr. Mathews's father.—First appearance of Mr. Mathews at Drury Lane Theatre.—Mr. Sheridan reading the part of *Sir Peter Teazle.*—Mr. Mathews in the character of the Obi woman in "Three-fingered Jack." — Extraordinary effects produced by Mr. Mathews's personation of Mr. Pennyman.

At the accustomed period in 1804 the Haymarket Theatre re-opened, with the addition of Mr. Bannister, jun. (as he was then distinguished, his father being still alive,) Mr. Colman having previously assured Mr. Mathews that this engagement should not interfere with him; but that he felt it necessary, from the general weakness of his new company, to obtain an additional prop to support it. Mr. Colman kept his word; and, to prove that there was no falling off in his attraction with the town in consequence, the following observations in one of the leading journals appeared (after the production of one of the novelties of the season, " Guilty or not guilty").

Of the actors, Mathews must be placed in the foremost rank. To the character of *Triangle* he did more justice than any actor of the day could have done; he was more genuine in his humour, and less flippant in his manner, than Fawcett—equally natural with Bannister—less laboured than Munden, and with a felicity of countenance that predisposed the audience to mirth before he opened his lips.

His second season, indeed, served only to increase his popularity. He fairly shared with Mr. Bannister the applause of each night; and in every new piece was duly considered both by manager and audience. In July he took for his benefit Goldsmith's comedy of "The Good-natured Man," in order to show himself in a part in which he had acquired much provincial fame; and it will be seen from the following sample of general opinion how far he was justified in his own confidence in this performance:—

Haymarket Theatre, 28th July, 1804.

"The Good-natured Man" was performed last night at this theatre. The chief excellence of the night—and, indeed, as great an excellence in comic humour as our theatres can boast—was the playing of *Croaker* by Mr. Mathews. He displayed an imagination of uncommon fertility. He was under no necessity of repeating an action or look, because he had run the round of his conception. Every scene induced the spectators to say, "This is exquisite! yet this singular luxuriance can never continue to the end." It did continue, however, and with additional novelty of illustration of the same kind of humour to the very end. *Croaker's* tone, when he discovers what he thinks to be the letter of an incendiary, was very happy; but still finer was the succeeding scene, when he watches the supposed incendiary. It revived in our mind the idea, though no copy, of some of the best of our deceased actors; and Mr. Mathews may assume the just confidence that he will rival the fame of any of the most esteemed amongst them, if he lose none of that assiduity without which genius shortly fades into a mere shadow of its former self.

So rapidly did Mr. Mathews's popularity increase that an offer was made him by the proprietors of Drury-lane Theatre in the course of the summer, for the ensuing season. With all the delicate secrecy that the intimation required, he was told that he was engaged with the view of his becoming the successor of Mr. Suett, whose health was precarious, and the duration of whose professional powers was consequently uncertain. Mr. Mathews signed an engagement for himself and his wife for five years.

During this summer the health of Mr. Mathews's father rapidly declined, and towards its close he was so strongly impressed with his approaching death, although not immediate, that he summoned my husband to his cottage at Whetstone. A most affecting scene followed. This good man felt at peace within himself; he grieved only for those whom he saw lamenting at the thought of parting from him. Having a blessed hope of future happiness himself, he desired to leave all he loved on earth in that peace and good-will towards each other that he had throughout practised. He desired to read his will to his family, and to be assured that no heart-burnings or discontent would follow the distribution of his estate. It may be imagined that his liberality and the many calls of his *brethren* precluded him from leaving any considerable property. He bespoke my husband's indulgence for having divided a certain portion equally between him and his sister. This might, he said, be thought as unjust as it was irregular; but he appealed to his son's generosity not to consider it as a proof of unkindness, but as a result of his reflection that, as his daughter was unmarried, and might possibly be soon unprotected, upon the loss of her mother, who had been a great invalid for years, she would require more than he should otherwise have left her; while his son appeared rapidly rising into easy circumstances, and probably would soon find even the moiety that was intended for him of little moment.* It need not be added, that Mr. Mathews declared himself perfectly contented with his father's intended disposition of his property. After this the good old man seemed to be better; and though he continued ill, his son almost hoped that the final blow might yet be averted for a time.

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* This moiety my husband never claimed.—A. M.

The autumn arrived, and with it my husband's first appearance at Drury-lane Theatre, on the 17th of September, in the arduous character of *Don Manuel*, in " She would and She would not."

Theatre Royal, Drury-lane, Sept. 17th, 1804.

Last night the lively comedy of " She would and She would not," was performed at this house. The chief novelty was the *entrée* of Mr. Mathews, in the part of *Don Manuel*. After gaining a high degree of provincial reputation, this gentleman was engaged by Mr. Colman, and has acted with great applause for two seasons at the Haymarket. He is certainly well entitled to a situation at one of the winter theatres. Testy, fond, doting old men, starved lacqueys, starch sectarians, and divers other eccentric characters, find in him a very humorous representative. He has the rare merit among comedians of this cast, always to be consistent with his assumed character. If he be a Quaker, he does not smoke his own primness. If he act the hoary lover, he does not seem sensible that he is making himself ridiculous. He is perfectly free from grimace and extravagance. He chose *Don Manuel* very judiciously for his *début* on these boards, as it affords ample scope for a display of his peculiar powers. He went through the part very successfully ; but was more particularly happy in the scene when he thinks that all his cares are over by the marriage of his daughter with the pretended *Don Philip*. The manner in which he dandled his pocket-handkerchief, as his future grandson to spring from the union of the two females, convulsed the audience for several minutes. His reception was flattering in the extreme.

The melancholy event of his father's death precluding a second appearance in the character which he played the first night, Mr. Mathews was compelled to perform, on the 11th of October, *Sir Peter Teazle*, in "The School for Scandal;" for little leisure was allowed to him for the indulgence of sorrow—an actor's private feelings are required to be merged in his public duties. Sheridan's celebrated comedy was to introduce to the town that charming actress, Miss Duncan, from the Theatre Royal, York, in *Lady Teazle*. Mr. Sheridan, then proprietor of Drury-lane Theatre, expressed his desire to Mr. Mathews, that he would allow the author to read it to him, and give his idea of the manner he, Mr. Sheridan, thought that *Sir Peter* should be acted.

Mr. Mathews had many misgivings on this subject, and most embarrassing it proved in the result; for so totally unlike was Mr. Sheridan's reading of the character from every other conception of it, that it was next to impossible for the actor to adopt any one of his suggestions. Had it not been known that Mr. Sheridan was the author of the play, it would have been difficult to credit his acquaintance with the part in question. The consequence may be anticipated.

Mr. Sheridan was dissatisfied with Mr. Mathews's performance when the night came, (as, it was said in the green-room, he had been with every previous representative of it, including King,) and, after the second night, Mr. Wroughton resumed the part, taken from him by Mr. Sheridan's desire, and given to Mr. Mathews. Mr. Sheridan grumbled with Mr. Wroughton's performance after the play was over, as much as he had done at that of Mr. Mathews. Notwithstanding this vexation, all went on smoothly when it was over; and Mr. Sheridan, in every instance but where the feelings of authorship misled him, was a great admirer of Mr. Mathews, and courted his society to the end of his life.

Tate Wilkinson would take odd crotchets into his head, as I have observed, while casting his pieces, especially if they happened to be favourites of his own. When the pantomime of "Three-fingered Jack" was to be brought out at York, the manager determined that his principal comedian should perform the Obi-woman. This of course was by no means agreeable to Mr. Mathews; but he did not depart from his system of implicit obedience, and he made up his mind and *his face* to this disagreeable duty. It had been suggested that a mask was usually worn for the character; but he could not bear the heat of it, and all his ingenuity was employed in showing a countenance which all might see to be real, but yet be unable to recognise as familiar to them. In fact, he managed totally to destroy his own identity; and the surprise excited, even to those close to him, induced him, years afterwards, to practise many deceits upon friends and others, merely to try his power. Whenever he adopted the face, he added a character to the peculiar expression and features, and a thousand amusing scenes were the consequence. His first experiment off the stage was at Liverpool in 1803, at an evening party, where he had left me for a time, pleading business as an excuse, but promising to return. In a few minutes after he had left the room, the servant delivered a message—"A gentleman, a particular friend of Mr. Mathews, had arrived in Liverpool, and having inquired at his lodgings for him, was directed to the present house, and took the liberty of asking admittance to see his friend, as the gentleman purposed to leave Liverpool again by daybreak the next morning."

Mine host of course begged "Mr. Pennyman" (for that was the stranger's name, by his card) to walk up; and, as Mr. Mathews was momentarily expected to return, his friend was requested to remain until he came. The stranger professed not to have seen Mr. Mathews since his marriage, and inquired whether Mrs. Mathews was present? I was then introduced, and Mr. Pennyman from that moment devoted all his attention to me. In fact, Mr. Pennyman fell desperately and unequivocally in love with his friend's wife, who, betraying some alarm at his eccentric conduct and manner, (an alarm which the other ladies really suffered,) the host and hostess felt their mistake in having admitted a person who was evidently a lunatic. Mr. Pennyman perceiving this, thought it time to finish the scene; therefore, affecting to despair of his friend's return, he took his leave just soon enough to escape being turned out of the house.

In a short time after this my husband, *in propriâ personâ*, entered, and all present eagerly assailed him with an account of what had happened. He disclaimed all knowledge of the person described, or recollection of the name of Pennyman. After the extraordinary intrusion of this *extra-ordinary* man had been fully discussed, and just as the subject seemed exhausted, Mr. Mathews, who had been for a moment looking towards me, as the last speaker, turned suddenly round upon the rest of the party as the identical person they had been describing! The effect upon everybody was that of unutterable surprise, and it was several minutes before they could believe the evidence of their senses.

From this time nothing was talked of but

"Mr. Pennyman," who necessarily had several *aliases.* He visited all sorts of people, and our most familiar friends were alike deceived, for in no single instance was it detected; Mr. Mathews, when he became tired of supporting the character, always revealing himself. Those who had been told of this were incredulous of the effect, but were equally imposed upon by it. With those who had not been put upon their guard, and who had suffered from the Pennyman persecution, it was a general desire to see others writhe under his provoking impertinences; for whenever we have exposed our fallibility in judgment, it is some compensation to see others equally committed.

Mr. Banks, the proprietor and manager of the theatre, was a straight-forward man, but somewhat of a humourist. He said "he could not believe it possible that he could be imposed upon so simply as others had been." This was a fair challenge, and he was marked as the next subject. The stage-door keeper of the theatre happened to be an odd character, and my husband on that account was accustomed, in his way through the hall to the stage, to chat with him, in order to elicit some of his oddities. On the morning on which it was settled by Messrs. Young and Cooper, that Mr. Banks and others not yet initiated should be introduced to the person of Mr. Pennyman, Mr. Mathews stopped longer than usual talking to the said door-keeper, for the purpose of making his entrance that day a matter more to be remembered than it otherwise might be. As soon as he quitted him, Mr. Mathews immediately presented himself before Mr. Banks as the eccentric pest, and in a few minutes after, Mr. Charles Young (the acting manager) was seen bowing out the stranger alluded to, at whom the door-keeper gazed with the utmost astonishment, arising from his extraordinary face, voice, and manner; for in these respects only did the actor differ from him he had admitted to rehearsal ten minutes before, as Mr. Mathews never changed his dress on these occasions. When "the gentleman" departed, the man was told by Mr. Young that "he was a troublesome person, having no business or acquaintance with any one to excuse his intrusion behind the scenes, and therefore he must not again be suffered to enter." The man of course denied his having passed by his means on the present occasion. The next morning Mr. Mathews again went to the theatre, spoke pointedly as on the previous day to the man as he entered, and in a few minutes after, the door-keeper was accused of again allowing the troublesome stranger to pass. The poor man turned pale with surprise, declaring he had not admitted him, neither had he quitted his post. Well, the managers once more got rid of the stranger, and again gave their orders to the door-keeper to be more vigilant, and not again admit this person, on pain of his own dismissal.

It was diverting to Mr. Mathews to listen to the man's account of the affair to the other servants of the theatre, who had not happened to be present at the "strange gentleman's" visits; and it was remarkable that Mr. Mathews was never missed during the time when these scenes were passing, for the performers always talked to him about the intruder, as if he had necessarily been a spectator of that whimsical individual's conduct in common with themselves.

The visit of Mr. Pennyman, in fact, caused the theatre to be a scene of general confusion and misrule from this time. Most of the principal actors, and all the underlings, being totally ignorant of the secret, the speculation as to who and what this person could be was incessant, and the excitement general. The following day the same scene took place as on the preceding. The disagreeable stranger was again at the elbow of Mr. Banks, unannounced, interrupting the business of the stage. It was an anxious and busy period—a new piece was in rehearsal—never was a bore so ill-timed, so embarrassing. Mr. Banks growled, and felt vengeance against the door-keeper, whom he sent for upon the stage to confront with the intruder, on whom all courtesy had been exhausted by the now exasperated manager. The stranger persisted that the porter had willingly admitted him, as on the first occasion, and on the present one had thankfully received a piece of money for his civility. Monstrous! This was too much. The calumniated door-keeper turned livid with amazement at such falsehood, and trembled; surprise, rage, and the dread of discharge from his situation, all agitated the poor man, while at the same time he gazed with something like terror upon the strange mysterious being before him. A suspicion that he was endued with superhuman means of gaining entrance crossed his mind, and he exclaimed in a tone of awe, "He must be the devil himself!" The stranger still persisted in his account, and Mr. Banks, harassed and wearied with the affair, and out of all patience, insisted upon the instant departure of the intruder. To the dismay of all who were in the plot, the enraged porter, who was a powerful man, and now desperate at his own danger of dismissal, upon some indication of resistance being manifested by the slim stranger, in a moment seized him in his bony grasp, before any one was aware of his intention, and carrying the luckless offender to the hall door, gave him in ejecting him, such a violent blow across his back, that it laid him senseless on the outside, when the door was closed and double locked by the infuriated porter. This was almost a tragical ending to the farce. Mr. Mathews, when able to rise, crawled home in a state of great suffering, which for a time disabled him from playing any more practical jokes, and warned him never again to try them upon one of *bone* and *sinew*.

Not at all discouraged by this result, when its pains were forgotten, Mr. Mathews's next grand experiment was made in the following season at Drury Lane Theatre. The green-room at that period shared the attractions of the stage. In the great green-room only the first class of performers was admitted, and, unless in costume for any character, no one thought of entering it except in an evening dress. With regard to all ceremony and forms it resembled a private drawing-room, into which certain patrons and admirers of the drama were allowed as a privilege to enter from a door leading from the dress-boxes to the side scenes — for there were no private boxes at that time except the manager's. There some of the most distinguished for rank, fashion, talent, literary or artistical celebrity, would resort; and so attractive was the society, that the performers, when they found themselves totally disengaged, would go thither in order to enjoy the relaxation of a pleasant evening.

In this place Mr. Pennyman would appear also in full dress, with his opera-hat under his arm, unquestioned, and without danger of being considered other than a friend of one of the gentlemen *habitués;* with several of whom he always took care to enter, each supposing him known to the other. Thus he stood, a stranger amongst his brethren. His eccentric appearance soon attracted notice from all; but each mastered the "quiz," which was ready at his equally eccentric manner and remarks, and his thousand extravagances; for the stranger was evidently a gentleman, and therefore not to be offended. None entertained a suspicion who the person really was, although Mr. Mathews's reputation for such sort of "tricks" had gone before him to the theatre. Only two persons were in the secret, myself and one of the performers. At first, suppressed laughter was all that his absurdities elicited; but soon stronger manifestations of their effect appeared. It was gradually ascertained, that none of the visiters knew anything of the stranger; who was, after a night or two, supposed to be a harmless lunatic. He made passionate love to me, (whom of course he chose as safest for such a purpose,) but preserved the gentleman so well, even in this liberty, that his eccentricity being taken into account, no resentment was shown towards him, especially as I seemed inclined to treat the affair as a joke. His ally (Mr. De Camp, I think,) took care that he should not be excluded; and indeed the fun he created prevented anybody from wishing to deprive themselves of so much amusement. Mr. Wroughton felt scruples. Incipient madness, it was considered, at the least, was evident; and one night Doctor Pearson was requested to come into the room to talk to the stranger, and to give his judgment with regard to his sanity. I remember on this occasion the Duchess of Devonshire (who knew Mr. Mathews very well,) was present, being drawn from her box in consequence of a description by some witness of this amusing and eccentric person, whom nobody knew. She was highly diverted; Mr. Pennyman sat by her, and entered into a long conversation, complimenting her upon her beauty and talents, while the duchess was convulsed with laughter. Doctor Pearson meanwhile made his observations; and eventually pronounced the stranger's intellects to be diseased. At present nothing serious was perhaps to be apprehended, yet the case might resolve itself ultimately into some dangerous consequences: and the doctor advised Mr. Wroughton to refuse him admission for the future.

Still the imposition was carried on. No one could tell how the gentleman got admittance, and therefore there was no mode of excluding him. Every night he attracted inconvenient numbers to the green-room; and on the nights when my husband performed, it was a matter of much regret to the performers that "Mr. Mathews always came into the room too early or too late to see a 'subject,' whom he of all others ought to see." It was really surprising that no suspicion arose of the truth. How long this imposture lasted I forget, but it was at length revealed by the impostor himself. One night, in the midst of a greater excitement than was usually created by him, and when the room was fullest, he suddenly stood before the assembled crowd as Mr. Mathews! A set of village clowns, or a group of children, gaping at a mountebank at a fair, (before the march of intellect commenced,) could not have expressed more wonder, nay, something approaching to terror, when the imperceptible change took place, than was manifested in the features of all around him.*

It was not to be supposed that such powers of surprising and entertaining others would be altogether neglected, or suffered to lie dormant by those who had witnessed them. I remember, amongst many others, a curious scene which occurred on a particular occasion when we dined with Miss De Camp, (afterwards Mrs. Charles Kemble,†) by whom we were invited, amongst other friends, to meet Mr. Stephen Kemble. Before dinner Mr. Kemble was told by Miss De Camp, that the only person she expected in the evening was a friend,

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* This disguise formed the foundation of a novel, published many years after by a celebrated writer.

† This amiable lady died whilst this work was passing through the press. Sept. 1838.

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who could not come to dinner, but who was desirous of being introduced to him, and would therefore drop in. She prepared Mr. Kemble to expect an eccentric person, and considerately bespoke his indulgence for the peculiarities of an amiable and respected friend, whom she had known for many years." To the hostess's surprise, however, "Mr. Pennyman" was announced before the cloth was removed; for at that period dinner-cloths were really removed, the English being extremely proud of displaying a well-kept table after, as well as at, dinner. After the preliminary introduction, he took the place offered to him, opposite to Mr. Kemble, having previously squeezed the *great* man's hand between both his own, declaring his gratification at being introduced to him. Then followed a series of ludicrous remarks, in voice and manner, after the approved samples of Mr. Pennyman, Mr. Stephen Kemble's countenance during the time exhibiting distress, lest he should betray his feelings at the grotesque features and manner of the stranger, who fixed upon him as his mark, and entirely engrossed his notice. At length Mr. Kemble's gravity was so overset as to render it impossible for him to support any longer an appearance of decent attention to Miss De Camp's guest, and lifting his ponderous body from his chair, literally shaking with laughter, he rushed out of the room. My husband, instantly dropping his assumed character, followed him, and found Mr. Kemble searching for his hat in the hall, to go away. Mr. Mathews, of course, would not permit this, and begged him to enter a sort of cloak-room for a few minutes, while he contrived to get rid of the person from whom Mr. Kemble had run away.

While Mr. Kemble sheltered himself in this room, he heard an animated conversation in the adjoining one which he had left, ending in Mr. Pennyman's declaring that he must go to another party, and that he had merely come for the purpose of being introduced to Mr. Stephen Kemble, and should take an early opportunity of improving an intimacy he had so long desired. Mr. Pennyman then left the dining-room, talking to Mr. Mathews, who accompanied him to the street-door, which being closed, he returned and released Mr. Kemble from a contemplation of the various patterns of the ladies' shawls, &c., and they together rejoined the party, Mr. Kemble declaring that "he would not sit in that man's company again for a thousand pounds. Sir," said he, turning to my husband, "he would destroy me. I should be suffocated by my efforts not to affront him." An explanation of all this took place (as may be guessed,) at the end of the evening, when Mr. Pennyman re-appeared; and before Mr. Stephen Kemble could escape, as he was trying to do, he found Mr. Mathews standing in the stranger's place.

I could easily give more instances of Mr. Mathews's success in his personation of Mr. Pennyman, but it is unnecessary. Not one case of even partial failure occurred, nor was the slightest attempt ever made, during Mr. Pennyman's existence, to identify him with Mr. Mathews, by the most wary of the deceived.

CHAPTER II.

"School for Friends."—Mr. Mathews's retentive memory.—His introduction to "Anacreon Moore."—Mr. Raymond's proposal to Mr. Mathews to turn Book-Auctioneer.—Haymarket Theatre.—Mr. Elliston's dispute with Mr. Mathews.

It was not to be expected that Mr. Mathews could be constantly employed at Drury-lane, for Mr. Suett still lived, and Mr. Bannister engrossed almost every character that was suitable for the young actor. He was content to wait "his hour," and good-humouredly did his best with the worst that was offered to him. A new comedy, written by Miss Chambers, called "The School for Friends," was about this time put in rehearsal, and at length advertised for a certain night, but had been postponed from time to time on account of Mr. Bannister's protracted indisposition, who, from increased illness, at the eleventh hour, failed them. Mr. Mathews was requested to study the part (a very long one) thus resigned by Mr. Bannister, and, to the surprise of the manager, undertook to be ready by the following evening, for which purpose he remained up all night, and went the next morning to his single rehearsal perfect to a letter. The surprise of everybody was great, for he could not even be suspected of knowing anything of the play, not having seen any part of it till his task was given to him.*

Mr. Mathews's study was always remarkably quick, and, contrary to the general result in such cases, his retention of what he had learnt was as remarkable as his rapidity in acquiring it. I have known him, without referring to the book, perform a character which he had neither acted nor read for twenty years.

On one occasion he undertook, at the English Opera-house, to perform his previous entertainments successively during the season. One night, not having looked at the bill, he totally forgot, at the very instant he was about to commence at the table, what he had advertised himself for that night, and, after a moment's embarrassment, he left the stage in order to ascertain which of his performances he was expected to deliver. Having inquired, he immediately returned, and proceeded without the slightest difficulty to the end.

In his "At Homes," although they were partially derived from his own observations, yet not only the links to the characters, but certain matter supplied by his authors from their own fancy, required much study; yet, during the sixteen years that he presented himself in successive seasons at that table, he never had a prompter, nor ever once took with him to the theatre a single memorandum or note of the night's entertainment. Even while acting in the regular drama he could never bear to be prompted, and any attempt to do so would have increased his embarrassment, had he been imperfect. I remember an instance in proof of this. Early in his London engagement at the Haymarket he had to perform *Caleb Quotem,* in "The Wags of Windsor." On his first appearance on the stage, instead of the usual address, he bowed to Mr. Farley, who performed *Captain Beaugard,* and, after a minute's pause, said to him, "My name, sir, is *Lingo.*" Mr. Farley, quite thrown off his guard by this extraordinary lapse in the actor's memory, exclaimed quickly, "The devil it is!" The audience laughed, and Mr. Mathews was in his turn puzzled. The prompter and the performers endeavoured to convey the right speech; but they tried in vain to "give him the word," as it is called: he could not profit by their efforts, and was altogether at a loss. At length his own recollection returned, and he proceeded with his usual volubility and correctness. As Mr. Mathews never was in the most trifling degree addicted to the *poisoned cup*, this was remarkable; he could never account for it, for he was not at all in a nervous state, and this was the only occasion upon which such an accident occurred during his professional life.

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* *Matthew Daw* was a Quaker, and his performance of the character was a great favourite with the town throughout the run of the play.

He never performed his "At Homes" so well when I was present, from the fact of my being acquainted in a general way with the matter he was delivering. It made him nervous to see anybody listening to him who had the power to correct a mistake.

In the October of this year Mr. Mathews again came forward as a substitute for Mr. Collins,* who was taken suddenly ill; and the part of *Robin*, in "The Prior Claim," was announced to the audience to have been "undertaken by Mr. Mathews from four o'clock the same afternoon, with his *usual alacrity*."

All this, however, was wearing away his first hopes; and at length he became weary with waiting only to take the place of the sick, or for "dead men's shoes." Suett's would have fitted him, but in the mean time he went barefoot, and sorely gravelled he was in consequence. He looked forward, however, to the time when "the dear little Haymarket" would once more open its merry doors, and there at least he had a set-off to the annoyance of being put in the back-ground at Drury."

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* A very clever actor, who died early. He was the original *Mock Duke*, in "The Honeymoon," and previously, *Timothy Quaint*, in "The Soldier's Daughter."

During our first or second year in London we met Mr. Thomas Moore, for the first time, at the house of Mr. Raymond, the actor. Mr. Mathews was in high spirits, and being charmed with Mr. Moore, did all he could to render himself agreeable, in return for the pleasure he received. He was, in fact, (to use a phrase he employed upon such occasions,) "upon his mettle," before such a man; and Mr. Raymond, who dexterously drew him forth to great advantage, was so struck with his power and imagination in some of his representations, that the next day he came to him with a project which he had formed after his guest's departure, suggested, he said, by the discovery of the very peculiar talent Mr. Mathews had displayed. Mr. Raymond then proposed to commence book-auctioneer, as far as capital went, and that Mr. Mathews should sell the works. In the event of his consenting to the proposal, Mr. Raymond pledged himself to pay him 500*l.* annually; or, if he preferred it, to give him an equal share in the profits arising from each sale.

So sanguine, indeed, was the projector of this singular speculation, that, I believe, had Mr. Mathews encouraged it, Mr. Raymond would have doubled the temptation. My husband, I remember, urged as one of his scruples, that the moment he should be required to stand up alone before a crowd, "the observed of all observers," his confidence and powers would utterly forsake him. Little then did he anticipate with what effect he should one day, "singly and alone," confront thousands of spectators, and chain them together for hours by the force of his extraordinary genius.

After this proposal, a sale of some of Mr. King's stage "properties," as they are called—namely, his Lord Ogleby's snuff-boxes and cane, with other dramatic valuables, was proposed in the theatre amongst the performers, for the benefit of his widow, when Mr. Mathews, in jest, proposed to become the auctioneer, and to sell them upon the stage to his brethren. This jest was turned into earnest by his being unanimously elected to the post. The chair belonging to *Careless*, in "The School for Scandal," was dragged forth, and the auctioneer *pro. tem.* disposed of the articles on terms far exceeding the expected sum, and with such effect upon all present, that again poor Mr. Raymond's "soul was in arms, and eager for the" *sale*. Again he was denied. It was not to be.

The summer found Mr. Mathews once more without "a rival near the throne." Mr. Bannister was not engaged at the Haymarket this year; nor was it judged necessary to supply his place. One of the novelties of the season was a comedy written by Mr. Cherry, called "The Village, or an Epitome of the World." Elliston acted as its foster-father, and very properly felt great interest in its success. Every justice had been done to the author, for whom Mr. Mathews felt equally anxious with Elliston. Mr. Elliston, on the second night, somewhat excited upon finding that it was in vain to expect a new verdict, (the comedy having in fact been condemned on the first,) made a sort of merit of bending to the house's decree, when he found he could not alter it; but addressed some rash words to Mr. Mathews, whose ideas on this point differed materially from his own. The quarrel between these old friends and schoolfellows was comical enough, although it threatened to conclude very tragically.

Colman's Theatre, July 20th, 1805.

Our report of the new comedy, entitled "The Village, or an Epitome of the World," was last night fully confirmed. It was, after a patient hearing, sent to the tomb of the Capulets, and numbered among the dramatic dead. After the audience had waited a considerable time, Mr. Elliston came forward and delivered a speech, in substance as follows:—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am at present considerably agitated, not so much by what has occurred before the curtain, as by a circumstance which has just taken place behind it (*universal consternation and anxiety*). I have, ever since I had the honour of appearing before the public, enjoyed such a share of its favour and patronage, that no consideration whatever shall deter me from speaking the truth. I have a duty which I owe to the audience, and a duty I owe to the proprietors who employ me; I have also a duty which I conceive due to an author, the latter of which, my desire to serve him may have sometimes induced me to press perhaps beyond the bounds of decorum. The number of those who supported the present piece last night induced me to give it out for a second representation, although, I *solemnly declare*, (*pressing his hand on his heart*,) contrary to my own opinion (*mixtures of plaudits and disapprobation*). It must now clearly appear to every unprejudiced person that the sense of the house is decidedly against it (*burst of applause, and some faint hisses*). I therefore, with your permission, beg to substitute "The Dramatist" for it to-morrow night (*very loud plaudits, with some few hisses*).

No stronger condemnation of the piece can be given than that advanced by Mr. Elliston. We are therefore saved much time and trouble in exposing its demerits. "Rest, perturbed spirit!" we war not with the dead.

The affair to which Mr. Elliston alluded was from our "Peep behind the Curtain," somewhat connected with "The Point of Honour." The only *dramatis personæ* were Elliston and Mathews. The former, it seems, notwithstanding his address to the public, attributed, in a scolding and denouncing manner, the failure of Cherry's piece to the bad acting of certain performers. Mathews, feeling indignant on the occasion, affirmed that every one had played as well as Elliston, if not better. The lie was then given, when Elliston was knocked down, and endeavouring to return the compliment to his antagonist, received a second knock-down blow from the same desperate hand. It was then urgently stated, that the stage was waiting, when Elliston very properly preferred his duty to the public to the continuation of a pugilistic contest much against him, but which would have amused the boxing amateurs, who are this day to assemble on a very great occasion. Threatening all the swords, pistols, and terrors of Westminster Hall, he came forward and delivered the speech we have now reported, "and that accounts for it!" In short, this dreadful engagement, which for a few minutes shook the theatrical world, began with "The Spirit of Contradiction," to which was added "The Liar," and concluded with "The Devil to pay."

The next day Mr. Elliston published the following letter; and it was regretted by all judicious persons that he had thus placed the matter before the public.

Haymarket Theatre, July 20th, 1805.

Sir,—Some extraordinary misrepresentation having appeared with respect to an occurrence at this theatre last night, in which I happened to be a party, I owe it in justice to myself to require that the facts may be correctly stated.

It is true that a momentary altercation did arise between Mr. Mathews and myself immediately after the dropping of the curtain last night, which was attended by some warmth on both sides; but it is not true, as has been asserted, that I was "knocked down twice," nor indeed that I was "knocked down" at all. Nor is it true that I was placed in any situation humiliating to my feelings as a man, nor in the slightest degree derogatory to my character as a gentleman. Without using any idle professions as to my own means of self-defence, I may be pardoned when I say that those who know me best must be sensible that I am not likely to be seen in any such state of degradation.

Neither is it true that this disagreement grew out of any assertion made by me, that Mr. Mathews, or that any gentleman of this theatre, had done less than his duty in supporting the piece which had not met with the publc approbation. What the circumstances were it would be useless and perhaps impertinent in me to obtrude on the public attention. It is enough to say, that Mr. Mathews and myself have every likelihood of being good friends, and that, were we not so, it would be difficult to find any man more ready than myself to subscribe to the professional excellence of Mr. Mathews, and to acknowledge the fidelity and zeal with which he at all times exerts his talents for the benefit of the theatre, and for the amusement of the public.

It has also been alleged, that I was officious on this occasion in addressing the audience. Those who blame me for addressing the audience cannot be aware that in so doing I am only discharging one of the duties I owe to the theatre. It is obvious that on many occasions, in point of respect, an audience must be addressed. That office in this theatre happens just now to fall on me. In the present instance I had to execute my duty under circumstances of peculiar difficulty and embarrassment. I stated hastily, but ingenuously, that an occurrence within the theatre had put me under considerable agitation. I felt anxious at once to convey to the audience, that I had not withheld any feeble assistance which it had been possible for me to have lent to the author; and on the other hand, that I had not at all wished to be accessary to forcing the piece improperly on the public. At such a moment, and under such circumstances, no liberal mind would expect minute exactness.

I am sorry to have trespassed so long on your attention. It must be plain, however, that my welfare and happiness depend in a great measure on public estimation; and I hope it will not seem surprising that I should be anxious to show that I have not only aimed at obtaining public favour, but that I have struggled hard to deserve it.

I am respectfully, sir, your most obedient servant,

R. W. Elliston.

To the Editor of the Morning Post.

It seemed from this address, dictated, to say the least, by very bad taste, that Mr. Elliston had but one purpose, namely, to contradict the report that he had been knocked down, which fact he implied was a degradation, as if the most courageous person in existence was not liable to the effects of mere muscular superiority. Mr. Elliston, however, thought otherwise; and he induced several by-standers to sign a declaration to the effect that he was *not* knocked down. Amongst these vouchers is to be found the name of Hatton, which will be recognised as that of Mr. Mathews's rival for a time in Yorkshire, who at this period was engaged at the Haymarket in a very subordinate situation.

July 21, 1805.

Having been by-standers during the accidental difference between Mr. Elliston and Mr. Mathews at the Haymarket Theatre on Friday night last, we feel it incumbent on us to declare, that the statement of Mr. Elliston's having been knocked down on that occasion is totally void of foundation; and that no circumstance took place which was in any respect dishonourable to that gentleman, or indeed to either party.

It is also our duty to declare, that the author of the comedy of "The Village" is under considerable obligation to Mr. Elliston for the interest taken by him in the success of that piece, and that without his exertion, we believe the comedy would not have been brought fully before the public.

Robert Palmer, W. Hatton,
John Palmer, F. G. Waldron,
Charles Taylor, Prompter.

This declaration was silly enough; Mr. Elliston's reason was fairly obscured by the excitement of the moment, and no better result was produced than the following notice which he provoked.

THEATRICAL FRACAS.

Sir,—I have been astonished at reading a letter in several of the papers of yesterday from Mr. Elliston, relative to a fracas which took place at the Haymarket Theatre on Friday, and in which he was a principal performer. Mr. Elliston says he was not knocked down once by Mr. Mathews, and, *à fortiori*, he was knocked down twice. What I complain of, Mr. Editor, however, is, that though he has thought fit to occupy half a column of a newspaper with his letter, he has not condescended to give any explanation upon the subject to the public. That a warm altercation did arise behind the scenes between him and Mr. Mathews, he admits; that he rushed upon the stage as if from a scuffle, all the audience can testify. If he was not knocked down by Mr. Mathews, are we to suppose that he was not kicked or cuffed? It is reported that Mrs. Powell received two black eyes in endeavouring to part the combatants. I have heard many other rumours, and wish only, for Mr. Elliston's sake and the credit of the theatre, to know exactly the true case. Sir, I am the more anxious to know this, because I am disgusted with that gentleman's affectation in identifying his judgment with that of the audience, in the case of the new comedy. Can Mr. Elliston forget that on the first expression of disapprobation, he did not, as he insinuates, yield his better judgment to persons connected with the theatre, but that he did, without a moment's hesitation, and with all the aptness and dexterity of an Old Bailey solicitor, put himself in opposition to the audience? He cannot also forget that in the fracas on Friday night he half unsheathed his sword, like another Bobadil, and hurled defiance into the teeth of a gentleman in one of the boxes, for daring to use the liberty of expressing his opinion, a liberty always enjoyed, and which, I hope, will never be relinquished by a British audience.

An Auditor and Spectator.

Upon this subject many successive letters appeared in the public press, both from and to Mr. Elliston, who was anxious that Mr. Mathews should also publicly give his version of the affair; but he was resolved not to obtrude himself upon the public, and this resolution mortified Mr. Elliston excessively. He then proposed that the matter should be carried on between two of their respective friends. Mr. Elliston, through the gentleman who acted for him on this occasion, (Mr. Warner Phipps,) demanded an apology from Mr. Mathews for striking him. Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Carr refused this concession on the part of his friend, who conceived himself the aggrieved party in the first instance; and that as the blow had been returned by Mr. Elliston, they were equally situated. Mr. Phipps persevered, but Mr. Carr was firm.

At last there seemed to be no alternative but that "satisfaction" which seldom satisfies, especially if accompanied by "a bullet in the thorax," or elsewhere. On pain of such result, Mr. Elliston again demanded an apology; in contempt of it, Mr. Mathews still refused one. Both acted in the spirit of the two potent states I have heard of, one of which wrote imperiously and significantly to the other, "Pay us tribute, *or else*——;" and was answered by his redoubtable enemy, "We owe you none, *and if*——." Thus the parties concerned in this *dark transaction* stood, like the hostile relations in "The Critic,"—"at a dead lock." The principals could not stir without the consent of their accessaries—the accessaries could not move without the concurrence of the principals; and Messrs. Carr and Phipps at this crisis became alarmed; their responsibilities were awful! They had at once the honour of the disputants in their hands, and the happiness of their respective families in their hearts. Both were humane as well as honourable characters; they had no *Sir Lucius* blood in their veins; neither wished to place his friend, however "snug" the lying might be, "in the Abbey." At last a middle course was determined on between the *civil* powers, and terms were proposed in which Mr. Mathews was required, not to apologise, but to *sign his name* to a declaration.

Spring Garden Coffee-house,
25th July, 1805.

I declare upon my word and honour, that I have never injured, nor endeavoured to injure, Mr. Elliston, in the opinion of the proprietors or managers of the Haymarket Theatre, or any one of them; and that I never countenanced any party in hostility to Mr. Elliston's interests.

C. MATHEWS.

Spring Garden Coffee-house,
25th July, 1805.

I consider the foregoing declaration from Mr. Mathews a sufficient evidence that I have been mistaken in the suspicions I had formed, as to any injurious conduct on the part of Mr. Mathews towards me; and I very much regret that I should have wronged Mr. Mathews so far as to have entertained any such suspicions.

R. W. ELLISTON.

This was something like "If you said so, then I said so;" and "No virtue like an *if*," settled the matter." But oh! the chagrin, when two or three "bloody-minded" *Sir Lucius's* of the winter theatres, with whom Elliston was no favourite, discovered that these "incensed men" were parted, and no noble blood was spilt! It was, indeed, laughable to see their dismal faces when Mr. Mathews came home with his peace-making friend, and proclaimed the final close of hostilities. Thus ended this foolish affair, which is supposed to have arisen from concealed jealousy on the part of Mr. Elliston, of his friend's undue influence with Mr. Colman on more than one occasion—a suspicion perfectly unfounded. From this moment, however, the broken link of their long friendship became, by means of their two kind friends, like a broken leg after skilful mending, all the stronger for the fracture, and it lasted to their latest hour.

The reconciliation, by some means, became known, and on their next meeting upon the scene of their mutual triumphs, the audience good-naturedly recognised them, not only as equal favourites, but restored friends. The following paragraph appeared in the newspaper on the following morning:—

> The Haymarket Theatre was fashionably attended last night, to see the performance of "Speed the Plough," and "The Village Lawyer." The audience seemed to feel the emphatic shake of the hand which Elliston, in *Young Handy*, gave Mr. Mathews, and rewarded their cordiality with great applause.

A very touching episode (as it seemed at the time) was woven into this foolish affair. A young German, who was very much devoted to us, (Baron Langsdorf, since Chargé d'Affaires and Minister of Hesse Baden) felt much anxiety at the position in which he saw Mr. Mathews, and offered to take the quarrel out of his hands in case of extremity, and to *fight Mr. Elliston for him;* urging as a reason that he had neither wife nor child, and therefore that his life, should he lose it, was not of so much importance as that of Mr. Mathews. I recollect the difficulty my husband had to convince this warm-hearted young man (then quite ignorant of our customs and opinions) that such a measure would not be sanctioned or accepted by Englishmen.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Theodore Hook's farce of "Catch him who can." — *Mr. Pennyman's* first appearance in public.—The veteran Moody. — Letter from Mr. Colman to Mr. Mathews. — Ventriloquy. — Letter from Mr. Young to Mr. Mathews. — Mr. Mathews meets with a severe accident. — His re-appearance at Drury-lane Theatre. — His first appearance in London in *Sir Fretful Plagiary.* — Mr. Mathews's first attempt to perform an "Entertainment." — Mr. James Smith and his Letter. — Albinia, Countess of Buckinghamshire. — Mr. Abraham Goldsmidt. — Mr. Mathews's introduction to the Prince of Wales. — The actors' dinner to Mr. Sheridan. — Mr. Theodore Hook's extemporaneous singing. — Letters from Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Colman to Mr. Mathews. — "Twig Hall." — Mr. Liston. — Miss Mellon (afterwards Duchess of St. Alban's).

In the course of this or the following season, the farce of "Catch him who can," written by Mr. Theodore Hook, for the purpose of bringing in juxtaposition the talents of Mr. Liston and Mr. Mathews, was produced at the Haymarket Theatre with success. In the farce Mr. Mathews introduced *Mr. Pennyman* to the public. The audience at this period was not so well prepared as in later times for the astonishing flexibility of Mr. Mathews's features, and the present specimen of his mimic power was received in such perfect silence, as at first to make him believe that this disguise had altogether failed. But when he resumed his wonted appearance, the applause was tumultuous. The following account of the performance appeared at the time: —

> To Mr. Mathews, who is the great strength of the Haymarket Theatre, the author (Mr. Hook) is indebted for the success of this, his new piece, called "Catch him who can." Nothing could be more admirable than the rapidity with which Mr. Mathews, as the Nobleman's servant, shifted from one character to another. In his personation of an old Frenchman, he not only disguised himself wonderfully by his dress and foreign pronunciation, but so completely altered his manner, face, and voice, that we question whether he was immediately recognized.

About this time I remember our being invited to dine at the house of Mr. Samuel Maynard, at Chiswick, to meet Mr. Moody, who was at that time a very aged but a very fine old man. He amused us exceedingly before and during dinner, with his general conversation and anecdotes of the olden time, and evinced no sign of mental decay. In the evening, however, the aged man stood confessed. Mr. Mathews, who always loved to exert himself for the gratification and amusement of the very old and the very young, did various things expressly for the entertainment of Mr. Moody, who was beyond measure surprised at his peculiar talent, declaring from time to time that " Garrick was not greater in what he did." It was at length proposed by the master of the house, who was himself a fine amateur singer, and his daughters also accomplished musicians, that as everybody in the room had done something to entertain Mr. Moody, he could not refuse to sing them a song in return. With this suggestion, playfully made, the old gentleman immediately complied, beginning, in strong but uneven tones, the old Scotch song of " We 're a' noddin," the words of which he gave in a broad Irish accent. When he had proceeded nearly to the end of the second verse, he suddenly stopped. We waited a short time, thinking that he was endeavouring to recollect the rest of the words, but as the pause continued and he gave no indication of resuming his song, Mr. Maynard observed, " I 'm afraid, Mr. Moody, that the rest of the words have escaped your memory." — " Words, sir ! what words ?" asked the old man, with a look of great surprise. " The words of your song." — " Song ! what song, sir ?"— " The rest of the song you have been so kind as to favour us with."—" I don't understand you, sir," said Moody. " ' We 're a' noddin,' the song of which you sang one verse."—" God bless you, sir," said Moody hastily, "I 've not attempted to sing a song these ten years, and shall never sing again. I am too old to sing, sir."—"Well, but you have been singing, and very well too," urged Mr. Maynard. To this, Moody with agitation and earnestness replied, "No, no, sir! I have not sung for years. Singing is out of the question at my time of life." We all looked at each other, and then at the old man, who exhibited in his face and manner such an evident unconsciousness and indeed vacuity, that we all felt we ought not further to revert to the subject, but leave the poor old gentleman satisfied of the truth of his assertion.

This was an affecting evidence of partial decay, and Mr. Mathews used to describe the effect it had upon his feelings with tears in his eyes, when he came to this part of the story, which was as fine a specimen of his serio-comic powers as any he ever gave. I forgot to remind him of this scene in after days: it ought to have been remembered, for it would have formed an admirable pendant to his description of Macklin's lapse of memory, so beautifully described in his "Youthful days." Had I not proved a more faithful remembrancer in other things, which he would have forgotten, or set no store by, the public would in many instances have been great losers. What difficulty have I had sometimes to persuade him of his excellent powers in many a description, which he considered unworthy of trial, so diffident was he frequently of his most successful efforts—for he had no conceit; but when he found he pleased, his gratification arose from surprise at the success of his experiments. On the contrary, he was soon depressed, and always wished to give up any attempt which had failed to elicit from his audience some positive evidence of success, and I have frequently had to soothe him into a good opinion of some of his best efforts, which had been most successful, but which had been felt too deeply to be acknowledged by plaudits. I allude to his *Monsieur Mallet*, his *Ruined Gamester*, &c. In such representations, the clapping of hands would have been less an evidence of his power over the audience than the tears which invariably accompanied them, but which, to one who was generally accustomed to such vehement applause, in their silent effect, gave no intimation of praise.

By the following letter it will be seen, that Mr. Mathews continued on good terms with the manager of the Haymarket Theatre, as well as with the public. I cannot remember on what occasion he first ventured his ventriloquy before a London audience, (probably on his own benefit night,) but it is evident that it was a successful effort, and considered attractive to the theatre.

My Dear Mathews, 26th August, 1806.

I am dreadfully gravelled on this conclusion of the season for want of new matter; and, as it is occasioned in some measure from the dulness of my own muse, (which has shirked me in my efforts to finish my farce,) I feel that I owe the more to my partners to do all that can be done during the remainder of our term. Will you, under these circumstances, repeat your ventriloquy on Saturday? As I am thrown out of the intended play, it will be of service. Truly yours, G. Colman.

To Charles Mathews, Esq.

Anxious as my husband had long been to get his friend Mr. Young once more side by side with him, he was nevertheless thwarted in all his hopes. Mr. Young married soon after we left him at Liverpool, a lovely, amiable, and accomplished creature (Miss Julia Grimani). This lady died ten months after their union, leaving a newly-born infant, at once to point out to her husband the cause of his sorrow, and, after a time, to prove an alleviation to it. At length we had the pleasure of perceiving that our friend had so far regained his natural buoyancy as to feel once more a lively interest in his profession, and to look upon his child's welfare as a source of future consolation. I will here give a letter received from him at this time, characteristic of his playful mood, which, though "no' material to the story," (as the old Scotch lady said,) may be acceptable to the reader.

Dear Mathews, Liverpool, Feb. 22nd, 1807.

"Give him an inch and he will take an ell." Why should I be the first to break in upon a good old custom so long established as to have become proverbial; and why did you so readily and speedily undertake my former commissions, and execute them so entirely to my satisfaction? The reason is plain. You looked forward with a still soliciting eye to be intrusted again with my high behest. "Why, man, you made love to the employment;" and it would be vile ingratitude in me to withhold your wished-for reward! Take it, then, dear Stick! may it give you every trouble upon earth—may difficulties arise upon *each other's backs*, (pretty metaphor!) until you have made a mountain to o'ertop the towering head of the thin monument, or thick St. Paul's! I read in this day's paper, that "The Curfew" will be published "Monday morning," February 23rd, 1807, by Mr. Philips, Bridge-street, Blackfriars. God bless your two sticks of sealing wax.* Run all the way from Russell-square to Fleet-street—buy me a book or *two*, or THREE. Then run to Mr. Powell, prompter,—snatch the prompt-book out of his hand, and fall to cutting and slashing in due form. If we do not get it out immediately, we shall be badly off; for the weather here is such, that the people must be literally dragged out per force to come near us: this has injured the "Forty Thieves." Now, if "The Curfew" does not ring a peal to alarm and call together all Manchester, I shall not get money enough to pay my place in the mail next Passion week, when I purpose positively to visit London. If you find there will be much alteration and trouble in marking the book, send one off without, per mail, and give another to Mr. Powell, requesting him to mark it with all possible speed. If Thursday morning, or, at farthest, Friday, pass away without the arrival of a book, cut or uncut, I shall resolve into a dew of mortification, chagrin, and disappointment, and all other deadly sins.

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* A comparison, originating in Mr. Mathews appearing, in one of his characters, in a pair of red silk stockings, his legs being remarkably thin and shapeless at that time.

I write in better spirits, and I feel myself better than I had almost expected to be again. I am in the house at Liverpool with my child. He is grown the most delightful creature you can imagine; healthy, strong, and the best tempered little animal you ever beheld.* Don't mention to any one my design of being in London in Passion week, I request. Love to your wife and child.

Yours truly, C. M. Young.

Pray, pray, pray, remember the curfew
Tolls the knell of parting day!

PS.—I have only run over here to see my boy, as a Sunday treat. I return to-morrow to Manchester, to play in "The Travellers;" so don't make a mistake, and direct to me here, because I date my letter from here. If you can scrawl down some idea of dresses, shall thank you more.

To Charles Mathews, Esq., Great
Russell-street, Bloomsbury.

Soon after this, Mr. Young finally came to terms for the ensuing season with Mr. Colman, and made his first appearance in London at the Haymarket Theatre, in "Hamlet," with a success which his subsequent career justified.

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* Now known as the Rev. Julian Young, a gentleman of great merit, and likely to rise rapidly to eminence in his profession.

During the Drury-lane season of this year, Mr. Mathews met with an accident at a match of pigeon-shooting; an amusement of which he often partook as an excuse, I verily believe, for spending the day out of town; the sport always taking place on Barnet Common, the neighbourhood of his early pleasures and most endeared associations. The accident was thus announced in the newspapers: —

> We are sorry to hear that Mr. Mathews, the actor, has severely suffered by the bursting of a fowling-piece on Friday afternoon, when he was tempted to engage in a match at pigeon-shooting, near Barnet. His left hand has been much injured by this unfortunate accident, and his whole frame has received a very severe shock. A similar accident occurred a few years ago to Mr. Bannister. It is to be regretted that persons who are in a situation of life which demands a full possession of all their external powers should engage in such dangerous diversions.

He returned home at eleven o'clock at night, with his arm in a sling, and though he owned he had hurt his hand during the day's amusement, I was not aware till the next morning, when the surgeon who had attended him immediately after the accident, came to dress it, that anything serious had occurred. He would not distress me, and in order that his pallid face might not shock me, he had walked for a short time in the street where we lived, imitating a mail-coach horn; his usual manner of announcing his safe return home after a short absence, if at a time and place where he could do it without being observed.

This accident proved very severe, and he remained under the surgeon's care longer than was at first expected. A new comedy by Mr. Kenny, which was in preparation, in which Mr. Mathews was required to perform a principal part, was in consequence postponed. At this time, while he was recovering from his accident, a piece called "The Blind Boy" had made its appearance at Covent Garden, with great éclat, and he felt very desirous of seeing it; but, as there would have been an obvious impropriety in being present at a public place while he was supposed to be, and was in reality, unable to act, (for although he was quite well in other respects, he was unable yet to take his hand out of a sling,) he determined to pay to the pit, believing that in such a dense mass of people he should escape particular notice; and he soon felt satisfied by observing all about him apparently strangers to his person. In fact, he was seated among persons deeply intent upon the object of their visit, and utterly unobservant of anything but the stage. One of these professed total ignorance of all the performers, and threw himself upon a better-informed neighbour for intelligence; so that whenever a fresh face appeared, he applied for information. "Who is that?" he would say; and as surely would he to whom the question was put answer confidently, Mr. ——, or Miss ——, at hazard, always being wrong in the name he gave. "The learned Theban" was a sort of animal who deemed anything better than to confess himself ignorant upon any point; therefore, he continued to misinform his simple and confiding friend, who was satisfied at the close of the play that he had been gratified by the performance of Mr. Fawcett in *Hamlet*, Mr. Kemble in *Rosencrantz*, Simmonds in the *Ghost*, Cooke in *Polonius*, and Mrs. Siddons as *Ophelia*, &c. All this had fidgeted Mr. Mathews throughout the play very much, and nothing but his desire to remain unnoticed prevented him from setting his neighbour right. At last the afterpiece began, and he was obliged to hear Miss De Camp, in the *Boy*, called Charles Kemble; Miss Norton, Mrs. Davenport; Fawcett, Emery; and Liston, Dignum, and so on. This, too, he bore; but at last he was touched to the quick by hearing his own name given to some subordinate person in the theatre; and in an evil moment he observed with annoyance, pretty visible to his neighbour, "No, no, sir, *not* Mathews, that is Mr. ——." The man turned short round at this correction, somewhat impatiently, and looked his corrector in the face, as if with an intention of *out*-facing his assertion; but in a moment his sternness relaxed—his pertinacity vanished—his compressed lips distended into a smile of awakened recollection, and with a significant blink of his eye he said, "Why, *you* are Mathews! I knowed you the moment you spoke, by your *wry mouth!*" Indeed, it soon became difficult for him to move anywhere without being recognized. In proportion as he became known, his shyness increased, and his dislike of being noticed in public *out* of his profession, or by strangers, was always a serious drawback to his enjoyment.

At the Haymarket this year Mr. Mathews first played *Sir Fretful Plagiary* before a London audience; and the success of his performance was recorded by the greatest dramatic critic of that day, Mr. Leigh Hunt, whose judgment was universally sought and received as infallible by all lovers of the drama. My husband unfortunately did not become acquainted with him for some years afterwards; but so high an opinion did he entertain of Mr. Leigh Hunt's sound criticism of dramatic talent, and his superior mode of writing upon it, that whenever he found himself an object of praise to that gentleman, he was much gratified. I will here insert Mr. Leigh Hunt's remarks on his performance of *Sir Fretful Plagiary.*

The first honours of the evening most undoubtedly belonged to Mr. Mathews, and he obtained them in all their luxuriance. His *Sir Fretful Plagiary*, for true comic indignation, and a perfect agreement of all his actions and looks with his main passion, was indeed the finest performance we have witnessed for a long time. We can imagine no actor to have excelled, and hardly any to have equalled it.

Acting, however, is always difficult to describe in proportion to its excellence; and we do not know how to give a proper idea of the hurried earnestness, mixed with an air of indifference, with which he asks the critical opinion of his friends—the instantaneous and wrathful composure with which he parries all their objections—the restless impatience with which he entreats to hear the history of some newspaper criticism on his play, and the workings of his countenance at the relation. We never yet saw so perfect an expression of rage, and pretended enjoyment. While the lower part of his face stiffens with a most dreary smile, his eyes stiffen with a glare equally horrible; till, after looking from side to side at his friends, and laughing like a tickled man with the tooth-ache, he suddenly tames down his muscles into the most black indignation; pretending to be enraged because his friends imagine him to exhibit in every petty action the impotence of an old man's anger. The whole scene was as worthy of the actor as of the author. For our parts, when we feel so much delight at good writing and good acting, we begin to persuade ourselves that we are not of that ogre race of critics that would devour human kind indiscriminately; for, though we cannot contrive to praise Mr. ——, or to admire the violence of Mr. ——, we can feel infinitely pleased and thankful at the writing of Sheridan, and the acting of Mr. Mathews.

In the course of this winter, 1808, Mr. Mathews conceived the idea of performing "An Entertainment;" yet doubting the possibility of one pair of lungs being able to furnish strength sufficient for three consecutive hours' exertion, " the occasional assistance of Mrs. Mathews in the vocal department" was called in as a make-weight; and, as the entertainment was only intended to be represented in Yorkshire, where I had been always received with partiality, such an auxiliary was not altogether insignificant to the end desired.

Our friend Mr. James Smith kindly undertook to write some songs suitable to Mr. Mathews's peculiar powers, and to link together certain descriptions, which he had heard him give, of eccentric characters, manners, and ventriloquy. So excellent was the whole, that it proved brilliantly successful; and this first effort of actor and author, after ten years, became the foundation of that extraordinary series of " At Homes" upon which my husband's great professional reputation was perfected. Amongst the songs, " The Mail Coach," and " Bartholomew Fair," which Mr. Mathews afterwards sung till all playgoers were familiar with them, were the most popular, and though introduced so long ago, and on every possible occasion, they were as full of point and attraction in the year 1818 as if then heard for the first time.

As this entertainment was so important in my husband's theatrical career, I will annex the first bill ever published of " The Mail Coach Adventures."

By permission of the Right Worshipful the Mayor.

Theatre Royal, Hull.

On Wednesday evening, April 12th, 1808, Mr. and Mrs. Mathews, of the Theatre Royal, Drury-lane. Mr. Mathews (with the occasional assistance of Mrs. Mathews in the vocal department) will exhibit an entire " New Entertainment," consisting of recitations, songs, imitations, ventriloquy, &c., entitled

" THE MAIL COACH ; OR RAMBLES IN YORKSHIRE."

PART FIRST.—Recitation : Introductory address ; general improvement in the conveyance of live lumber, as exemplified in the progress of heavy coach, light coach, and mail ; whimsical description of an expedition to Brentford. Song : " Mail Coach." Recitation : Description of the Passengers ; lisping lady ; Frenchman, and critic in black. Song : " Twenty-four Lord Mayors' Shows." Recitation : Breaking of a spring ; passengers at Highgate ; the literary butcher, or Socrates in the shambles ; learning better than house or land. Song : " William and Jonathan." Recitation : Definition of " Les Belles Lettres ;" French poets ; rhyming defended. Song : " Cobbler la Françoise ;" theatrical criticism ; dimensions of Drury-lane stage ; critic put to flight by two puns ; imitation of an election orator ; scramble at supper ; drunken farmer ; cross readings. Song : " Lodgings for Single Gentlemen." Recitation : Wandering Patentee ; Mrs. Mathews's introductory address. Song : " Mrs. Mathews." Recitation : Dialogue ; Mrs. M. and Nicky Numskull ; duett ; harmony and discord (from Music Mad). Song : " The Yorkshire Beauty, or the Misfortune of being handsome."

Between the first and second Parts, Shield's celebrated song of "Heigho," by Mrs. Mathews.

Part second.—Recitation: Digression on the study of the law; whimsical trial; Goody Grim versus Lapstone; cross-examination of a pig. Song: "The Assizes." Recitation: Quaker's Tour to Gretna; imitation of an idiot catching a fly. Song: Mrs. Mathews, "Poor Idiot Boy." Recitation and song: "Gamut and Quashee, or Pantomime better than Speech." Recitation: Justice deaf; imitation of "Fond Barney;" highway robberies; quaker's precaution; Capt. Mac Jumble from Tipperary, his history. Song: "Whisky and Gunpowder." Ventriloquy, or Little Tommy. Song: Mrs. M. "The Tuneful Lark." Recitation: Mac Jumble's Amours; Quakers overtaken; Ostler's soliloquy. Song: "The Exciseman." Recitation: A bull; mountebank's harangue. Song: "Quack Doctor." Recitation: A French Irishman; unexpected discovery; a battle; spider and spy; description of a fair; Mr. Punch; Yorkshire giant; wild beast man. Song: "Bartholomew Fair." Recitation: Bull the second; York Minster; Arrival at York; journey ends. Imitations of some of the principal London Performers:—Mr. Kemble, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Bannister, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Cooke, Mr. Fawcett, Mr. Incledon, Mr. King, Mr. Munden, Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Braham, and the late Mr. Suett. Concluding Address.

How deeply indebted my husband considered himself to Mr. Smith for connecting and applying in so masterly a manner the matter which was before him, and for the humorous songs, written so admirably to display the original powers of the singer, may be imagined. "The Mail-

Coach" and "Bartholomew Fair" were the first of their class, and might be said, like the two bags of gold, to be the fruitful parents of many more, well known to the public as belonging peculiarly to Mr. Mathews.

For this invaluable service Mr. Smith declined anything like payment, and would at length only allow my husband to present him with some trivial remembrance. Mr. Smith's acknowledgment of this trifle offers so agreeable an evidence of his liberal feelings, and his friendship for my husband, that I cannot resist inserting it here.

Basinghall Street, July 8th, 1808.

Many thanks, my dear sir, for your present. Your kindness has caused you to overrate my poor abilities; though you do no more than justice to the alacrity with which I endeavoured to serve one for whose private worth and professional talents I entertain so high an esteem. I barely supplied the outline; your imitative skill supplied the colouring and finish.

Had I leisure for the undertaking, I certainly should endeavour to exhibit your powers in a more dramatic form, and transplant my weak pen from the lecture-room to the stage; but other avocations prevent such an attempt.

It is rather a novel case, that the "pursuit of the law" should save a man from damnation.

With best compliments to Mrs. Mathews, believe me,

Dear sir, very truly yours,

James Smith.

To Charles Mathews, Esq.

At this early period Mr. Mathews's peculiar powers in private life were talked of, and he was sought by all party-giving ladies, and lion providers. Innumerable were the applications "to know Mr. Mathews's terms for an evening," and to beg his company; every one of which drew from him a refusal to visit the person so applying on any terms.

Albinia, Countess of Buckinghamshire, was one of his admirers, who almost persecuted him, and he tried all possible means to check her wish to lionize him on all occasions. In so many unpleasant situations, indeed, did she place him, that at last he determined to decline the next invitation, and wrote a note excusing himself on the plea that his health did not admit of any exertion out of his profession. Lady Buckinghamshire was, as he expected, much offended, and in a neat equivoque, made him understand that she was not deceived by his excuse. Her reply was briefly — "Lady Buckinghamshire's compliments to Mr. Mathews, and is very sorry to find him so *indifferent*."

About this period Mr. Mathews first saw the Prince of Wales, at a fête given to His Royal Highness by Mr. Abraham Goldsmidt, at Roehampton. My husband at first hesitated to accept the invitation, and for some time balanced between his desire to meet the great personage he much wished to see, and the fear that he might be asked when there to contribute towards his entertainment. He consulted Mr. Braham, who removed his fears, telling him that he believed Mr. Goldsmidt invited him because he had met him at his brother's, Mr. Benjamin Goldsmidt, (to whose family Mr. Mathews was much attached,) and out of respect to his private as well as professional character. The invitation was therefore accepted, and no indication was given of any such design as my husband had at first suspected. At supper he managed to sit next to Mr. Braham at a table remote from that at which the Prince sat, and where several of his familiar friends were also assembled. All apprehensions of any annoyance having long before subsided, he was cheerfully enjoying himself with his friends, when he felt a tap upon his shoulder, and received the next moment an intimation in the following form from his host. "Mr. Mathews, you must go with me to the other table. The Prince wants you." To this curious mode of address, my husband replied, "Impossible, Mr. Goldsmidt. I cannot think of going."—"But," added his host, "he has asked for you,—you must go:" meaning to say "etiquette requires you to obey the command of royalty." Poor Mr. Mathews sickened at the thought, and appealed to Braham, who gravely filled up the measure of his discontent, by coolly replying, "You must go." Accordingly away he went with his host, who left him near the table where the royal guest was seated. He was hesitating what to do, (for there was no vacant seat,) when Mr. Goldsmidt rejoined him, and with less delicacy than eagerness to gratify His Royal Highness, called out aloud, " Mr. Mathews, Mr. Mathews, stand opposite, stand opposite; the Prince wants to *look* at you !" His Royal Highness seemed quite shocked at this rather coarse version of his desire, and did not at the moment forget that he was England's gentleman, for with a hurried and even embarrassed manner, he said, as he bent forward across the table, " I am very happy to be introduced to you, Mr. Mathews, but there 's no seat on that side." The Prince then turned to Mr. Sheridan, who was next him, and said, " Sheridan, can't we make a seat for Mathews between us?" at the same time contracting his own and making a space, he pressed my husband between himself and Mr. Sheridan. This was an instance of good-hearted politeness to the person he had been the means of distressing, which endeared him to Mr. Mathews ever after. The Prince soon drew him out in many things, of which he professed to have heard a great deal, and which Mr. Mathews could not have attempted before him under less judicious and delicate influence, and the rest of the evening proved very gratifying to the actor.

It was about this period that my husband first became intimate with Mr. Theodore Hook.

The election for Westminster had recently taken place, and Mr. Sheridan was chosen one of its representatives, on which occasion the actors of Drury-lane celebrated their proprietor's triumph, by giving him a dinner at the Piazza Coffee-house. To this dinner Mr. Hook was invited.

In the course of the day many persons sung, and Mr. Hook being in turn solicited, displayed, to the delight and surprise of all present, his wondrous talent in extemporaneous singing. The company was numerous, and generally strangers to Mr. Hook, but, without a moment's premeditation, he composed a verse upon every person in the room, full of the most pointed wit, and with the truest rhymes, unhesitatingly gathering into his subject, as he rapidly proceeded, in addition to what had passed during the dinner, every trivial incident of the moment. Every action was turned to account; every circumstance, the look, the gesture, or any other accidental effects, served as occasion for more wit; and even the singer's ignorance of the names and condition of many of the party, seemed to give greater facility to his brilliant hits than even acquaintance with them might have furnished. Mr. Sheridan was astonished at his extraordinary faculty, and declared that he could not have imagined such power possible, had he not witnessed it. No description, he said, could have convinced him of so peculiar an instance of genius, and he protested that he should not have believed it to be an unstudied effort, had he not seen proof that no anticipation could have been formed of what might arise to furnish matter and opportunities for the exercise of this rare talent.

It was a bright day altogether, upon which, Sheridan himself, however, shed but little light. He made a speech, which was not remarkable for any of that brilliancy which he was wont to strike out in oratory. In fact, he was seldom agreeable in the presence of actors; before them his cheerfulness and mirth (if they existed at the period to which I allude) never appeared. He always entered his own theatre as if stealthily and unwillingly, and his appearance amongst his performers never failed to act like a dark cloud, casting a shade for the time over all the gaiety of the green-room — a place generally so delightful to all who entered it. Mr. Sheridan's coming "displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting" of the time, and the actors might aptly have applied to him a passage from his own admirable "School for Scandal," and exclaimed as he entered, "Oh, here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry:" for he was on these occasions almost morose. I perfectly well remember one particular evening, when Miss De Camp, after a somewhat *animated* colloquy with him, closed it by telling him, "that the performers were all very happy before he entered the room, and that he never came but to make everybody uncomfortable."

Mr. Sheridan certainly was not in his element there, although himself the son of an actor. Not only in this place, however, but elsewhere in his later years, this great man gave sad evidence of a decrease in social enjoyment. He drank, even where ladies were present, inordinately at table.* I recollect once sitting next to him at a dinner-party, and his frequently talking to me in the course of it, (knowing me perfectly well,) and soon after the cloth was removed, my husband having said something which called forth general mirth, Mr. Sheridan asked me whether I "had ever before been in company with Mathews, if not, that I had a great treat to come!" He was in fact very fond of my husband, and courted his society often both at his own table and elsewhere. At these times the most mirthful feeling he ever exhibited seemed to be elicited by Mr. Mathews's efforts; for Mr. Sheridan, like all men of great genius, had a full measure of respect and admiration for that which he discovered in others; but it appeared that his fine spirit had so far lost its buoyancy, that it was no longer able to keep itself up against younger and fresher minds. Nay, even with men of his own age, his wit could not compete with superior animal spirits. Mr. Colman perfectly broke him down by the force of his vivacity. Sheridan had no chance with him in repartee, and he always gave up to his little merry companion, after the first attempt, in which he generally failed. His genius seemed to forsake him for the time, and Mr. Colman's fire appeared to blaze the brighter for being kindled upon the embers of the splendid ruin before him.* He always felt his own advantage, and was more brilliant as he found the other more dull. Mr. Colman's joyousness was not met, even at the time my husband first knew these great men, with corresponding feeling: Sheridan's fire, though not his wit, was evidently burnt out; while that of his charming contemporary proved inextinguishable to his last hour.

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* Sir Walter Scott, in his Diary, (published since the above was written, in Mr. Lockhart's life of that great man,) made the following memorandum, in reference to this subject, after a visit of my husband at Abbotsford. "Mathews assures me that Sheridan was generally very dull in society, and sat sullen and silent, swallowing glass after glass, rather a hinderance than a help; but there was a time when he broke out with a resumption of what had been going on, done with great force, and generally attacking some persons in the company, and some opinions which he had expressed."

Mr. Sheridan, in these his latter years, seemed tacitly to admit his absence of power to keep up with such men, and, to feel that depression which precluded him from doing himself justice amongst more alert minds, though always ready to do honour to any excellence he met with. He was fond of promoting any occasion for mirth, by the talents and exertions of others, and many such intimations as the following were received by Mr. Mathews from him, when any plot for a *petite* comedy entered the great dramatist's head, for private amusement.

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* It must be understood that my impressions of Mr. Sheridan relate to the latter part of his life.

My dear Sir, Saturday morning.

You will oblige me exceedingly by favouring me with your company this evening, at half-past eleven, to execute a little plan I will explain to you.

Yours truly, R. B. Sheridan.

To Charles Mathews, Esq.

Sometimes the writing of these little despatches was so wretchedly bad as to render their meaning unintelligible, and to compel my husband to take the notes to his son, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, for translation; and I have now in my possession writings of his containing words that would puzzle the most ingenious to make out without the context. I remember a droll fact illustrative of this. One night an order of Mr. Sheridan's was stopped at the box-door of Drury-lane Theatre, and pronounced a forgery, because the door-keeper *could read it!*

Dear Mathews, November 11th, 1808.

"I 'gin to pull in resolution."

When I talked of holiday Sundays, I felt bolder than, upon reflection, I ought to do, with a due respect to the regulations of our college,* into which I have more particularly inquired since we met. So another day, in the course of the month, I will, if you please, attend you, and be kind enough to look out for a moon for me, for I incline to the party of the Lunatics, and am no follower of the Prince of Darkness, on the King's highway.

So, Sheridan and Hood for ever! No Paull! God save the King! Bless the crier! Huzza! huzza!

G. Colman.

To Charles Mathews, Esq.

A short time previously to the date of the above letter, my husband had taken a pretty rustic cottage, in one of the most retired lanes of Colney Hatch, where he nightly drove me, even after the latest performances at Drury-lane, for the pleasure of enjoying an hour or two the next morning, and the whole of every Sunday, in the air and neighbourhood so interesting to him. From this spot we often visited his late father's cottage in the rural lane, where also his chapel stood. Mr. Mathews had even a boyish delight, tempered with much tender feeling, in sauntering near this spot, sitting upon the style opposite to the cottage-gate, and loitering about the scene endeared to him by early recollections. The above intimation from Mr. Colman referred to his first visit to "Twig Hall," so named after its nominal owner, little Charles, who had soon after his birth been named "Twig," by the same sponsor (Mr. Litchfield) who had given his father the early appellation of "Stick." The *Twig* was slight, and drooped in London air, so that a more healthy climate was absolutely necessary for its support. This little box was in fact considered his, and all who came there were but children for the time being, and confessedly and necessarily Twig's play-fellows.

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* Mr. Colman was at this time confined within the rules of the Bench for a debt contracted by *his father* to the father of the person who placed him there.

Recollection revives many a joyous scene enacted in the narrow compass of this tiny place, in which as many delightful associations were formed. There, in rooms hardly bigger than cells, would friends of the rarest talent unbend and revel in rural freedom once a week; and little Twig welcomed his guests, under the conviction that they came to "*pay* wis him." Amongst these Mr. Liston, (or, as Twig called him, for want of better pronunciation, Misser *Lick*ton,") was an especial favourite. One morning after breakfast I missed these two children, and from an upper window discovered the little *dot* with him of larger growth, earnestly engaged in the game of "hide and seek," the latter running with serious aspect from gooseberry-bush to gooseberry-bush, calling out the misleading *whoop!* to the urchin, who on each intimation trundled its tiny round figure after the sound. I could not suppress a laugh when I saw the *bigger boy* as he crouched down, quite unconscious of a witness of his grave amusement, draw out his snuff-box and take a pinch of snuff to heighten his enjoyment. This indulgence gave time and opportunity to his little dupe to reach the spot, with a scream of delighted triumph at the long-sought detection of the hider, who vainly tried to escape from the grasp of the small hand which seized his coat, while his turn was insisted on, and *Misser Lickton* was commanded to turn away his head from the whereabout of his co-mate in the game until the appointed signal was given.

On the night when Mr. Liston led forward as father the young man with whom he had played as a child, the "Old and Young Stager" again *played* together before me; but my smiles on that occasion, unlike those of old, were mingled with tears, for I sat *alone*, and thought of him who would have witnessed with pride and gratification the triumph of that night, and the general kindness which greeted his son, so much beloved by him. What a multitude of recollections of bygone scenes, and sweet associations, did that scene bring before my mind's eye, as I beheld the object best and dearest to me on earth, relinquishing the profession of his choice, and standing forward, untutored, in one of the most arduous nature, even to those who have studied it with care, and practised it from their earliest days; and all this for the sake of his mother!*

But, to return to the cottage. There often might be seen Harriet Mellon—then a youthful, slim, and beautiful creature: she would come all joy and simplicity for a day's recreation. How merry and happy she was! perhaps happier than when splendour hedged her in from the enjoyment of simple pleasures, the love of which I believe to have been inherent in her nature. I see her now, returning from a tumble into a neighbouring pond, in the middle of which her horse had unexpectedly chosen to drink. How unaffectedly she protested, when dragged out, that she did not care for the accident, and walked home, though with difficulty, across the common, with her muslin garments saturated with muddy water, and her beautiful hair dripping down her back! How we laughed while we afterwards dragged off the wet clothes from her fine form, half apprehensive for the consequences! Then again, what peals of merriment attended her re-appearance in the borrowed ill-fitting dress, that had been cast upon her, and the uncouth turban that bound her straightened hair, and which she was compelled to wear for the rest of the day! What amusement her figure created! how well she converted by her good humour an almost serious accident into one of general entertainment! How many other drolleries have I seen her enact at various periods, in the same place, my husband the leader of such revels. This little spot was in reality the *sans souci* of our friends, and little Twig the presiding deity of the place, and the epitome of fun and merriment; as such he was allowed perfect liberty for the time. One day he entered the room with his hands full of the sibyline leaves of the nursery — in other words, half a pack of very dirty cards, which he had abstracted from his maid's drawer, and with which he offered to tell Miss Mellon her fortune. Borrowing the cant and phraseology of the owner of them, he foretold that his favourite would some day be "married"—not to Mr. Coutts, the banker—not to the Duke of St. Alban's — but to a "*handsome carpenter.*"

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* I may here notice, in order to contradict it, a report that has made its way into the several accounts which have appeared respecting my son's entrance upon the stage,—namely, that in becoming an actor, he opposed the expressed wish of his father. So far from this being true, he was encouraged to adopt it within the last few years, for his father believed that he possessed the talent to excel in his own particular line; and, fearing that the pursuit of architecture was not likely to enrich him for many years, expressed his opinion that Charles might with greater advantage appear in public as an actor. It was the *son* who objected, nay, silenced, the arguments of his father, from the devotion he felt to that profession for which he had been educated; and I believe I may assert that this was the *only* occasion upon which his father's wishes were not considered commands by him. Their mutual love, and I may add, esteem, admitted of no differences; their affection never knew an hour's interruption; and he would have found it as impossible to his nature to fly in the face of his father's commands after his death, as he proved himself incapable of thwarting them while living. This every person who knew them can testify.

We ceased our intimacy with Miss Mellon just as she became a rich woman; but in after years we never glanced at each other in public for a moment, that I did not fancy that the Duchess of St. Alban's looked as if she remembered these scenes, and felt that they were very happy. "Twig Hall," in short, was a place not to be forgotten by its visiters. Alas! how few now remain to dwell upon the recollections this mention of it is calculated to renew!

CHAPTER IV.

"The Spanish Ambassador" and his "Interpreter."

Mr. Mathews's various powers of disguise naturally tempted his friends into a strong desire of witnessing the effects arising from them upon others. We had returned to town, and resided in Great Russell Street; and as our only *wooded* view was the gate of the British Museum, which faced our windows, my husband took every opportunity of running away from it for a day; and it became a sort of fashion amongst a knot of his male friends, to make parties for him to the neighbourhood of London, where good entertainment for *man and horse* was to be met with. At one period six or eight of these worthies determined to make a trip of pleasure, partly on a water-excursion. It was at the time when the excitement prevailed about Ferdinand of Spain; and it was suggested and arranged that Mr. Mathews should travel on this occasion as the Spanish Ambassador. His *suite* therefore disposed themselves in two carriages, "his Excellency" dignifying the foremost till they arrived at Woolwich, the place destined for the first halt. Here Mr. Hill,* one of the party, undertook the office of Interpreter, and he speedily whispered to the landlord the rank of the personage he had the honour to entertain under his roof. The intelligence acted like a spark of electricity, communicating its effect to the whole establishment, and setting it all in motion. In the mean time, "his Excellency" sallied forth on foot with his suite, in order to behold the wonders of the place. His appearance in itself was very striking, without the quick-spreading knowledge of his rank. He was dressed in a green frock-coat, buttoned up to his neck; his bosom, ornamented with a profusion of orders and ribbons of every sort, dazzled the curious eye of the observer. On his head he wore a large cocked-hat with patriotic devices affixed, such as "*Viva Ferdinand!*" upon a ribbon of purple ground, in golden characters; and "his Excellency" also wore a pair of green spectacles. In the streets of Woolwich he was followed and cheered by all the little boys in the neighbourhood, to whom

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* Mr. Thomas Hill, proprietor of "The Monthly Mirror," (so often alluded to in the early pages of this book,) and always the very good friend of my husband.

THOMAS HILL, ESQ.

From a Picture in the possession of [illegible] Esq.

London, Published by [illegible]

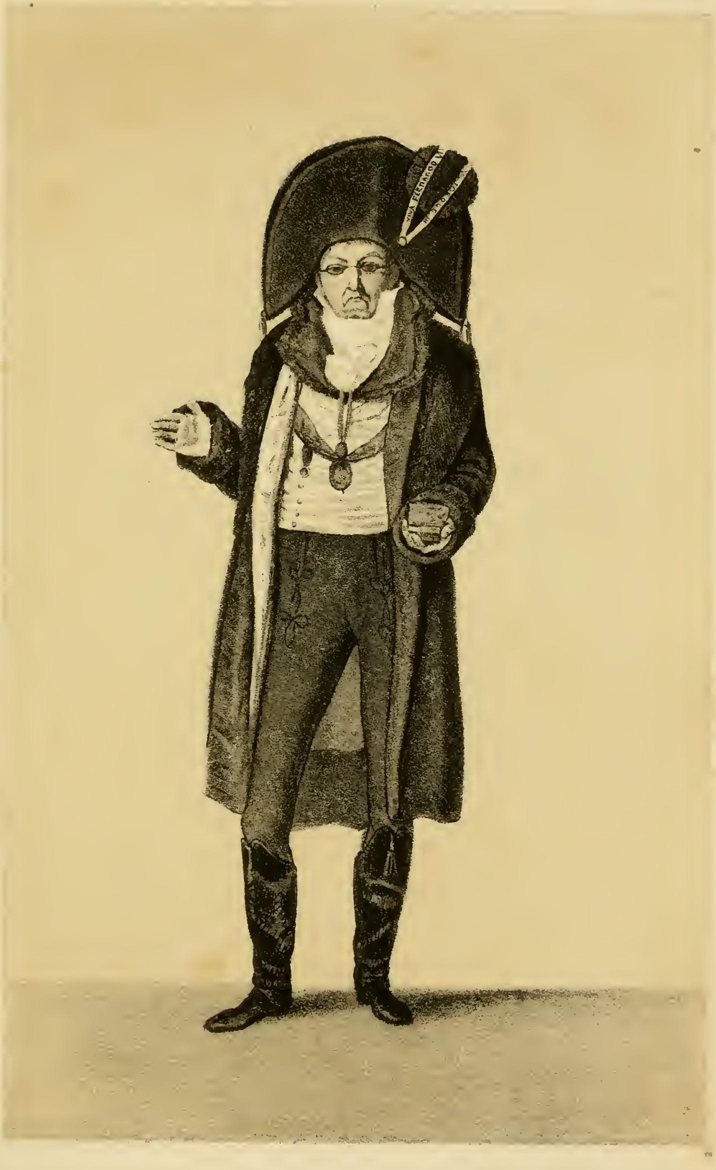
the condescending Ambassador bowed in amiable humility. He went into shops and bought divers things, speaking volubly the jargon which his Interpreter rendered into good English. At last, almost to "his Excellency's" consternation, a communication was made by the higher powers of the place, that whatever the "Spanish Ambassador" deigned to notice would be open to "his Excellency's" inspection the rest of the day, for which purpose the workmen had received orders not to quit the spot at their customary hours of refreshment, but await his commands! This was alarming. It was more than "his Excellency" reckoned upon, and fearful was the thought of detection under such a distinguished mark of attention. However, the Ambassador graciously accepted the proffered exhibition, and viewed all that was to be seen, with due show of surprise and commendation, faithfully interpreted to the comptrollers of the works. When at last this ludicrous scene ended, the Ambassador and his suite returned to take their "ease at their inn," where the preparations were indeed appalling. Every bit of plate that could be got together, not only belonging to the house, but, as they afterwards learned, from the neighbourhood, was displayed in gorgeous array, to grace the visit of so distinguished a guest. The landlord and his family, and his servants, were tricked out in all their best attire, to wait upon the great man, whom they were all drawn out to greet upon his return, courtesying and bobbing to him; all of which this high-bred man and illustrious foreigner acknowledged with a grace and condescension that won all hearts. He talked unceasingly, but they could only dwell upon what his Interpreter was kind enough to render intelligible. Now and then, indeed, a word of English would gratify their tortured ears—"Goode Englis' pepel!" "Fine houze!" "Tanks!" and such like comfits sweetened their laborious attendance.

I cannot now recount half the absurdities "his Excellency" committed, or that were committed for "his Excellency," whose averred habits differed very strikingly from those of the English. His Interpreter informed the landlord that, amongst other peculiarities, "his Excellency" required every article of use in vast quantities; hundreds of napkins, spoons, forks, plates; in fact, no man that had not lived in Spain could be aware of such inordinate demands. The first view of his bedroom presented to "his Excellency" about twelve dozen towels, piled up upon a table by the side of the washing-stand, for his one night's use. The Ambassador ordered about him in his *own language*, which was *translated* according to circumstances by his accomplished follower, whose interpretation sometimes was enough to overset the gravity of any hidalgo, though it was curious to observe that everywhere, when only a solitary advantage was to be obtained, and that advantage was reserved for the great man, the Interpreter always felt under the necessity of explaining that "his Excellency" had a taste for inferior things, and preferred what, to an Englishman, was objectionable, particularly in warm weather, namely, very small sleeping rooms, short and narrow beds, low pillows, &c. Things usually disdained by our higher orders were, in fact, matters of luxury in Spain; consequently the said Interpreter enjoyed the superior accommodation as a matter of duty which called upon him to appropriate the best of everything to himself. All this added to the amusement of the time, and laid up cause for future mirth.

The next morning the farce was resumed, and the same mockeries repeated. "His Excellency" breakfasted with the same ceremonies and results as at his previous day's dinner, *preferring* the stale bread, and resigning the new to his Interpreter, &c. Thus "perked up, in a glittering sorrow," he was not sorry, with all his love of "fun," to see preparations for a removal, which at length took place amid a crowd, assembled to see "his Excellency" depart, and which cheered him as he drove off.

The water excursion followed, and a small fishing smack was hired for the purpose of a sail. The master of it, a simple, illiterate, fresh-water tar, was duly impressed with the honour bestowed on his little craft by the noble freight it carried, and was all deference and delight. The Ambassador, feigning to suppose this little dirty-faced fellow a naval hero, expressed great respect and affection for the noble "British Capitaine," while he directed his Interpreter to inform him that he should boast of his acquaintance to Ferdinand, and predispose the whole of the Spanish nation in his favour. The old man shed tears of gratification at all this, and "his Excellency" would not suffer his favourite the "Capitaine" to move from his side. Refreshments had been carried on board, and amongst these a can, said to contain a quantity of lamp-oil, for "his Excellency's" exclusive drinking. Everything was done to excite surprise in the little master of the boat that could be devised at the moment. One thing I well remember. A piece of an apple had been cut into the form of a candle-end, and a bit of scraped almond completed the deception. The Ambassador, happening to drop his tooth-pick in a dusky corner of the boat, demanded a light from his Interpreter, who presented him with the above preparation in a luminous state; and "his Excellency," having searched for the tooth-pick and found it, blew out the candle, and after a minute's pause of hesitation where to place it, put it into his mouth with unconcern, and ate the whole of it! The "Capitaine" looked wonder and disgust at this, and more especially when "his Excellency," expressing a desire for some lamp-oil to wash it down, a glass full of yellow liquid was poured out, supposed to be what he asked for; and he swallowed it apparently with much relish. The master's chest absolutely heaved at this finishing proof of a depraved taste. However, the time came when the Ambassador and suite wished to land at their dining-place, and it was agreed that the master should await to take them back to Woolwich, where the carriages were left, to convey them to town. "His Excellency," however, had had enough of his empty dignity, and hungered for the solid advantages of a common man, of which it was the fancy of his Interpreter to stint him, while he wanted language to assert his rights and wishes. It was accordingly resolved that he should resign his honours, resume his mother-tongue, and leave his title behind him. Doffing his spectacles and medals, and exchanging his green for a blue coat — in fact, becoming himself, he re-entered the boat as a stranger, who desired to be taken to Woolwich; and, as it was understood by the master that his noble patron, the Ambassador, was not to return, he asked leave of the party to admit the gentleman applying. On the voyage back, it may be guessed that not much else was talked of on board but "the Spanish Ambassador;" and as the stranger expressed an interest in the particulars of "his Excellency's" trip, the master undertook the relation. This was by far the better part of the whole affair; for the vanity of the poor little man induced such exaggerations of his intimacy and favour with his noble friend, that my husband was inwardly convulsed while he listened to the account. He described "his Excellency" as a "wery personable man — not what in Hengland we should call 'ansome, but *werry personable*, and the *haffablest* cretor I ever seed in my life! Why, sir, he treated me more like a brother than any *think* else: called me *Captain*, and promised to mention me kindly in Spain, and offered to *interdoos* me to King Ferdinand! (But, Lord, I couldn't bear to live with such nasty devils!) What a happetite he had, too! I couldn't live with Spaniards, I'm sure, if they all eat like 'his Excellency.' He made me quite sick, old as I am, with his dirty Spanish ways. Why, if you'll believe me, he swallowed at one draught a whole quart of lamp *ile*, and eat up a large tally candle at a mouthful! I *seed him* with my own eyes, or I wouldn't have believed it. I seed it all go down his Spanish throat! I've since been werry much puzzled, though, to think whatever he did vith the *vick!*"

When the party reached Woolwich, they found their carriages ready to receive them, and it then being dark, they escaped further notice. But the



MR. MATHEWS
as the
Spanish Ambassador

visit of "the Spanish Ambassador" was not soon forgotten there; and though there was some after-suspicion that the attention of the resident authorities was expended on an impostor, yet the name of "his Excellency's" representative never transpired. A drawing was ordered to be made by the "Interpreter," in commemoration of the event, of which my husband had a copy; and the engraving now presented is taken from it, in illustration of the very faint and imperfect account which is here given of the hoax of

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

In apology, if it need one, for Mr. Mathews's early love of practical joking, hoaxing, &c. (a species of amusement very justly placed in the lowest scale of humour,) I think it fair to urge, that at the period these scenes took place he had no other opportunity of exercising his inherent and irrepressible powers of representation! In his profession there had been no scope for their display: he performed only in the regular routine of plays and farces. The drama's laws, then rigid, forbade any mode by which his unique talents could possibly be exhibited; and his spirits were so exuberant, that it seemed a necessity rather than a choice that they should find egress by any mode that presented itself to his imagination. The extravagant acts he practised were, in fact, like so many safety-valves, through which these spirit-fancies escaped, which, if restrained and driven back, might have preyed upon his mind to its injury.

To show that what I here assert is not merely imaginary, I will mention a circumstance that occurred to him many years ago. He had lived a very vapid, inactive life for some days, at a time when he was predisposed to mirth and mental freedom. He was amongst strangers, people who never made a joke, or were capable of receiving one. They were grave, matter-of-fact folks, and he was afraid to give loose to any of those active exercises of his vivacious imagination which he was wont to throw out in society. All was propriety and dulness. His spirit was pressed down, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd;" he never ventured a playful remark, for he was conscious that it would not have been understood. In fact, in the midst of many persons he felt alone, and at last, almost desponding.

One morning this party, all gentlemen, assembled for the purpose of spending the day in an excursion, and were mounted on their horses ready to proceed. My husband's depressed spirits were exhilarated by the beauty of the weather, and the prospect of a day's pleasure (free from the restraint of a room, listening to truisms) in the open air, where he would have uncontrolled power to gaze upon his idol Nature in her most beautiful form. He had not ridden out of the city for some weeks, and was in a state of childish delight and excitement. At this moment his eyes turned upon one of the party, a very little man, who was perched on a very tall horse, and who seemed unusually grave and important. Mr. Mathews looked at him for a moment; and the next knocked him off with a smart blow, felling him to the ground. The whole party were struck with horror; but no one felt more shocked than he who had committed the outrage. He dismounted, picked up the little victim to his unaccountable freak, declared himself unable to give any motive for the action, but that it was an impulse he could not resist; and afterwards, in relating this extraordinary incident, he declared his conviction that it was a moment of frenzy, induced by the too sudden reaction from previous stagnation of all freedom and amusement.

His intimate acquaintance at this time with a kindred spirit kept alive this desire to astonish others, for his own amusement, longer than it might otherwise have lasted, and gave, perhaps, a new impetus to his fanciful will. The youthful Theodore Hook had a head to devise, and nerve to execute, and lent himself, heart and mind, to every occasion of mirth; and when injury was to be punished, or folly reproved, these "two were a multitude" in furthering the end.

Mr. Hook was a master-spirit in such freaks, as he has since proved in higher aims. He devised many a plan which "astonished the natives" at the time; and the ingenuity of his contrivances, and the witty execution of them, were worthy of more important occasions.

I will relate one of Mr. Hook's *impromptus* in this way. Mr. Mathews was one of a party making an excursion upon the Thames. In the heat of the day "the voyagers" wished for a pleasant landing-place, in order to enjoy in shade and shelter the refreshments which their boat contained. One most inviting spot presented itself, and Theodore proposed it as suitable to their purpose, when his attention was directed to an enormous board, "courteously waving them" off, with a request that parties would not land upon those grounds. Now, had the proprietor of the said grounds been aware of the party that day boating, he would have done wisely to remove his injunction, or re-word it; for it proved as direct an invitation as when a rustic hoyden, at a merry-making, deprecates the kiss her admirer did not think of giving. Parties were requested *not* to land, and therefore this party *would* land; and so they *did*—all of them believing, except their leader and instigator to this trespass upon private property, that they might enjoy the shade without offence or detection during their repast. But, no sooner had they commenced operations, than they perceived a little portly gentleman coming at his utmost pace down the slope, evidently very hot with exertion and choler. The more timid of the party were for retreat, but Theodore kept his stand. Looking significantly at the others, and pulling my husband to his side, he coolly took out his pocket-book and pencil, and without seeming to notice the approaching stranger, made *memoranda* in his book, and observations on the place to his companion. At last, the owner of the grounds coming up to the party, began to denounce this invasion of his premises; but Mr. Hook, carrying it with a high tone, continued his investigation and pencilling, and observed aloud to Mr. Mathews, that he thought the *canal* might, with most propriety, be cut through *that* shrubbery, and turn directly across the front of the lawn. To be sure, it would be rather near the house, but that could not be helped, and at present he saw no other way of proceeding. The hot, portly, little gentleman started, and cooled down, changing complexion from red to pale. "What! sir!" said he, timidly and even fearfully, "am I to understand that a canal is to pass through these grounds?" Theodore leisurely finished his *mem.*, and then carelessly answered in the affirmative. The little gentleman now altered his first manner to one of great anxiety and civility; asked various questions as to the probabilities, time, &c.; and Theodore, who often whispered to his "clerk," (my husband,) while he pointed about the grounds, condescended to inform the questioner, that the conduct of the whole proceeding was given into his hands, and was entirely dependent upon his judgment, direction, and decision. The gentleman now began to bustle about, evidently uneasy, and anxious to conciliate this man of power, who told him that when he had made himself and his clerk masters of the whole scope and capabilities of the land, he and the friends who accompanied him in this anxious business meant to take their refreshment in some commodious part of the ground, to which he supposed there would be no objection. This was not to be allowed by the now truly complaisant little gentleman. "Oh, no, he could not think of letting the party remain *out* of doors; he begged they would all four do him the pleasure of taking refreshment within. Himself and his family had dined, it was true ; but something should be prepared for the party, and he entreated they would not refuse him the pleasure of entertaining them. Accordingly, the intruders followed their hospitable inviter; and while the servants were despatched to provide the best the house contained for these unexpected guests, they were presented in form to the lady of the mansion and her daughters, and the cause of their arrival was explained with significant looks, as much as to say, "Our delights here are *gone ;* but do not betray any anxiety before these men."

Well, the hateful canal-business was of course the topic of conversation. Theodore "thought it a pity so to break up a gentleman's shrubs; but private considerations must necessarily give place to public convenience," &c., to all which remarks the unlucky owner of the grounds gave a faint assent.

Refreshments in the dining-room were now announced, and the guests proceeded thither, attended obsequiously by their fluttered host, and one by one the ladies of the house, "on hospitable thoughts intent," followed, anxious no doubt to hear the extent of the threatened calamity. All soon became calm; the man of business talked largely of his power and influence with those by whom he was employed; hinted pretty freely that he could turn the canal in any direction he liked; and indeed at last "the hospitality" of his new friend, and "the amiability of his family," so wrought upon the sympathies of this planner of canals, that, after a bottle or two of excellent wine, he declared "it would be shameful to disturb so much comfort and good taste by such a process. Hinting, therefore, that he should look out for some other way to accomplish the intents of government, he took his leave with his clerk and friends, and with it the hearty liking of the whole family, whose comfort for the time this frolic had upset.

It is curious enough that some years after, this incident was woven into a French vaudeville, called "*Le gastronome sans argent*," and was performed by that admirable comedian, Perlet, in Paris, doubtless indirectly communicated by some friend of the boating party to the author of the piece.

For several years it was an annual custom with Mr. Hook and Mr. Mathews, and other *Messieurs* (one of whom is now a "potent, grave, and *Reverend* Signior") fond of a frolic, to go to Croydon Fair, for the purpose of cracking walnuts—and *jokes.* Innumerable were the diverting tricks played upon those they encountered, and upon each other, by these young and buoyant spirits. In pursuance of the latter portion of their amusement, on one occasion, while strolling through the market, Mr. Hook suddenly proclaimed himself the victim of fraternal cruelty, declaring that his brother, (Mr. Mathews,) in order to deprive him of his property, was confining him to his side, and otherwise rendering him wretched and dependent, and that he hoped the good people present would not oppose his escape, or attempt to follow him. As he said this, he suddenly sprang away from his party, leaving his unnatural relation in what he hoped would be an awkward dilemma. Brotherly instinct, however, suggested a means of averting popular indignation, and satisfying the crowd that his younger brother was in fact a lunatic, although a harmless one; and the rest of the party confirming this statement, Mr.

Mathews was allowed quietly to follow the fugitive, whom he and his friends soon discovered concealed at a short distance round a corner, waiting to rejoin them.

After this they repaired to the coffee-room at the inn. Here again the lunatic became very obstreperous, and behaved in a manner so as to justify the severity of his alleged brother, who, after a time, being a little nervous at the extent of his relation's paroxysm, left the room, and was standing at the outer entrance of the hotel, when a hearse trotted up to the door on its return from its melancholy journey. The driver, a little fat man, had just dismounted from the box, in his professional robes,—namely, a suit of woe, and eke a broad crape streaming from his hat, and hanging down his back. The man looked at my husband for a minute, and, smiling with much meaning, addressed him, as he bowed, by his name. "Ah, Mr. Mathews! my last inside passenger died of laughing at you, sir!" My husband, who generally preserved his *incognito,* was startled by this knowledge of his person, but being withal curious to know the man's meaning, inquired to whom he alluded. He was answered by a significant action over the shoulder of the man, whose thumb jerked at the mournful machine behind him, which still remained at the door.

It appeared, upon further questioning, that the recent occupant of the gloomy vehicle had gone to the theatre one night, to all appearance well, but had laughed so incontinently at Mr. Mathews's acting, as to return home in a state of such exhaustion, that it ended in severe illness, produced, as the medical man averred, from an over-excitement, *of which she died!* Mr. Mathews, half shocked, half flattered, was glad to forget the part he was said to have had in the death of the poor young lady, (who most probably had carried her *billet* with her to the theatre, as few people die of laughing, although many "have thought they should do so,") and eagerly yielded to a suggestion which this man's appearance and recent errand had occasioned. Accordingly, promising him half a crown, he engaged him to act a subordinate part in the comedy of "The Reprisal," which Theodore's freak justified his brotherly wish to "get up" for his benefit. This settled, Mr. Mathews returned to the coffee-room, where the young madman was carrying on the joke quietly enough, having, it seemed, enjoyed a lucid interval. But the return of his *cruel brother* brought on another violent paroxysm, and no expostulation could abate his resistance of all rational control; on the contrary, soothing seemed to increase his violence. At last his *brother* declared, that if he was not more obedient and resigned, he would resort to stronger measures, and send him back to London in a manner he would not like. This intimation only added to his outrageous behaviour:

he was threatened with confinement, and told that a hearse was in waiting to receive him, no other conveyance being attainable; and that he should be placed in that unless he became quiet. This threat produced no amendment, for, of course, it was received as a feint by the incorrigible maniac. However, at last the elder brother took a cord from his pocket, with which he tied Theodore's hands behind him; who, having no suspicion of the truth, favoured the act, while seeming to resist it. This arrangement being made, at a given signal in stalked the little fat man in black, whip in hand, and streaming hat-band, and with a solemn, *grave* air, proclaimed, "The hearse is ready, sir." For a moment the unfortunate captive looked at this messenger of woe with distrust. But again recollecting how impossible the reality could be, he tamely allowed himself to be led out of the room, in apparent submission to his brother's arrangement, and proceeded peaceably down the long passage to the inn-door. Here, however, the sight of the hearse, ready to admit him, and the little man holding the door open with his right hand, respectfully dangling his hat and band from the other, gave the lunatic such a shock, that suddenly releasing himself from his keeper's hold, he darted up the street, (his hands still bound,) with a hue and cry after him, his unfortunate relation and friends following up the pursuit.

Luckily for Theodore, he was tall and slim, with great agility of limb, so that he fairly distanced the hobnails of his pursuers, and sheltering himself amongst some trees at the edge of the town, waited calmly for his friends, who he believed would not carry their barbarity so far as to leave him there long, or suffer the people who had first followed him to remain at the head of the pursuit. In short, as he anticipated, his party "came at last to comfort him;" they unbound his refractory arms, and all had their laugh fairly out at the consternation they had left behind them. After this they dined at another inn, and became rational for the rest of the day.

It had been the custom to go to the theatre of the place on the evenings of these days; and therefore on this particular occasion the custom was not omitted. The play was "The School for Friends," in which, it may be remembered, Mr. Mathews was the original *Matthew Daw.* He was naturally desirous on this occasion that his party should behave with great decorum, as it would have been painful to him to have his humbler brethren of the sock and buskin suppose that he had come with a party to "flout at their solemnities;" and he could hardly expect to be altogether unknown to them. Mr. Hook, however, was not in a mood to be everything his friend wished; besides, he had a blow to return, a debt to pay, incurred on his account for man and *hearse.* He therefore talked loud, laughed during the serious scenes, and wept at the comic ones, &c. At last, my husband, feeling nervous, crept away from his party, and went to the upper box opposite (the only place in which he could find a seat). Here he congratulated himself upon being separated from the noisy set below, and believed that he was completely out of their ken. Unluckily, the performer of the Quaker (*Matthew Daw*) excited Theodore's risible propensities—not in the sense where laughing is a compliment; when suddenly Hook's eye caught that of Mr. Mathews, who had escaped to what he hoped was security against any implication in his friend's proceedings. Theodore now arose, and standing in the front of the box, bowed with great respect and gravity; addressing the audience, and begging their attention to a few words, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, you are pleased with Mr. —— the performer of the Quaker, who has hitherto deservedly met with your approval in that character; but I cannot allow you to be ignorant that Mr. Mathews, the original performer of *Matthew Daw*, is now in this theatre. The modesty inseparable from real merit has induced him to conceal himself in a retired situation; but, ladies and gentlemen, if you will look up to the top of the house, on your left hand, you will see him sitting in *that* corner" (pointing his finger to the exact spot).

What my husband felt at this moment may be imagined. He declared to me, that he could not have risen from his seat had he expected to be shot for remaining in it. The effect upon the audience, chiefly clod poles and market-people, was merely a vacant stare up to the corner to which they were directed; for the name of Mathews was evidently strange to them; and no positive idea was conveyed by the mention of it. One *Matthew Daw* was as good to them as another; and thus it is probable they would have thought that he of Croydon Fair was the best, had an opportunity been given to them of judging of their comparative merits.

There was no end to these instances of frolicking, and Mr. Hook could never resist a temptation to display some of his inexhaustible stock of humour for the entertainment of his companions. I will give another instance.

Mr. Mathews was one day driving him towards Blackheath; and at the approach to Shooters' Hill the merciful owner of the horse wished that he and his friend Theodore should descend from the gig and walk up the steepest part of it. As they were proceeding with this humane intent, a sort of ancient vehicle, called, for want of a more definite character, "a one-horse chaise," upon four wheels, appeared, slowly descending the steep. It was an unusually cumbrous and large-headed carriage, and more remarkable in that day, when smart single-horse carriages had long superseded such lumbering conveyances.

The first notice of the approach of this vehicle was a loud laugh from Theodore, before, however, he was near enough to be heard by the driver. The old and new carriages now approached. The one ascending paused in order to give its horse time to recover his pull; and at this moment Mr. Hook placed himself immediately in front of the large awkward, yet well-cared-for animal, that was sustaining the enormous machine alluded to, and which was occupied by a very old man and woman, coeval as it seemed with their carriage. When they found their modest and inoffensive progress interfered with, they stared in silence at the cause of such impediment. Mr. Hook, with great respect, took off his hat, and bowing to the old lady and gentleman, (for such they evidently were,) inquired whether it was really their intention to enter London in *that* carriage? The driver, unwilling to be behind-hand in courtesy, politely took off his hat also, and answered that "he certainly *was* proceeding to London." Mr. Hook then assuming the tone and language of a man who was unwilling to see his fellow creatures betrayed into a position that was likely to render them ridiculous, asked earnestly, "whether the driver was aware of the consequences of entering the metropolis in such a conveyance?" apprising him, that such a one had not been seen there for the last century. The old gentleman looked at his wife, amazed and perplexed, but continued silent.

His kind adviser, still at the horse's head, again remonstrated against their progress, declaring that the gentleman would repent it if he persevered, and conjured the old lady to influence her husband to turn back. The old people looked at each other again earnestly. The gentleman seemed paralysed with amazement at such an address; when his intrepid adviser, giving a searching look under the hood where the two faces were ensconced, started back with affected surprise, and exclaimed aloud to his companion, who had been silently wondering at the nerve which enabled him to make such an attack, "Now I look again, the man and woman are greater gigs than the buggy!" "Oh," continued he, addressing the travellers more resolutely, "you really must not proceed. Allow me to turn your nag's head round." He then suited the action to the word, leading dobbin a short distance up the hill again, who, nothing loth to retrace his way home, struggled upwards, without any obvious attempt from his master to prosecute his first design of proceeding to town. How the old gentleman ultimately settled the matter with himself and his wife was not known, as his saucy director remounted his friend's light conveyance, and could only look back a brief period, when certainly the headed chaise was slowly following them.

But I must not attempt to set down all I could tell of this extraordinary and always amusing result of leisure and love of "fun," coupled with an excess of animal spirits. I understand Mr. Hook, in riper years, has turned to good account these frolics of his "green and salad days" in his papers of "Gilbert Gurney," which I have never seen in a collected form; but in the numbers I have read I found one or two drolleries, (there ascribed to *Mr. Daly*,) and to the masterly hand of the original I refer the curious, for a better version of those anecdotes than my poor pen can furnish.

CHAPTER V.

Lord Eardley.—His eccentric manners.—A footman's application for a place.—His Lordship and the Clergyman.—Lord Eardley in the Green-room.—A trying question.—Destruction by fire of Drury-lane Theatre.—"Killing no Murder."—Letter to Mr. Mathews.—Mr. Mathews in *Mawworm.*—Origin of the sermon from the screen, in "The Hypocrite."—The Four-in-hand Club.—Farce of "Hit or Miss."—Offer from Mr. Arnold.—Re-opening of the Lyceum Theatre.—Cottage at Fulham.—Proposal from Mr. Elliston.—Mr. Mathews's reception at Liverpool.

Lord Eardley, of charitable and eccentric memory, was very fond of having Mr. Mathews domesticated with him at Belvidere,* and on such occasions my husband enjoyed himself excessively, although there were times when his spirits were not quite equal to a visit for days together *tête-à-tête* with a person of such peculiar manners, and with habits so strikingly the reverse of his own. "Early to bed, and early to rise," had probably rendered his lordship "healthy and wealthy," and therefore "wise;" but his visiter, whose time for real enjoyment in reading lasted always until two or three o'clock in the morning, when everybody but himself was fast asleep, could not but think it a hardship to be knocked up at daybreak the same morning. His Lordship was fond of quoting from "Every Man in his Humour" the words which my husband's name suggested:

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* His Lordship's seat in Kent.

"*Master Matthew! Master Matthew!*" (knock, knock, knock!) "*Master Matthew!* The cabin is convenient, *Master Matthew!*" (And enter, my lord.) "Come, *Master Matthew!* fine day! Breakfast ready, *Master Matthew!* Carriage ordered in two hours!"

Poor "Matthew," who was anything but "*Master*," or he would have ordered his wakeful disturber to be turned out of the room, was obliged to submit, for his host would have his humour; and often in these "morning calls" would sit by his bedside after he had awakened his guest from his three or four hours' sleep, and entertain him with a string of hackneyed jokes, saying, as he produced them, "Now, *Master Matthew,* this will do for Jack Johnstone." (Then came an Irish bull.) "Now, then, I 'll give you another for Braham. Braham, you know, was a Jew. *I* was a Jew once (old Sampson Gideon). Now, *Master Matthew,* this will do for yourself." When his lordship's stock of witticisms was exhausted he would rise to go away, saying, "Come, now you must get up; the cabin is convenient, *Master Matthew,* but you must come to breakfast," &c.

After breakfast, his lordship would drive his guest about his grounds and neighbourhood, in a low four-wheeled carriage, when the attendance of a servant was dispensed with, and the seat behind left vacant. One day a poor aged woman hobbling along the road, stopped to courtesy to the great man, who called out to her as she passed on, in his usually quick manner of speaking, "Old woman, old woman! where d' ye want to go? where d' ye want to go? How far?" The poor creature explained, and it being the contrary road to that whither Lord Eardley was driving, he immediately turned his horse round, desiring the old woman to get up into the hinder seat, afterwards depositing her at the described spot, where he left her in the act of calling down blessings upon his kind heart and condescending goodness. Shortly after this, Mr. Mathews perceived a young buxom girl trudging by their side, bearing a rather heavy load upon her head. She passed them as the carriage drawled along, and my husband called Lord Eardley's attention to her; who, understanding his implied expectation, observed, "No, no, *Master Matthew;* shan't tire my horse for her. Healthy *young* thing, *Master Matthew*, healthy *young* thing; strong enough to walk!"

One of Lord Eardley's antipathies was that of having attendants about him, and he would dismiss them from his presence whenever he could possibly do without them; above all, if they should be of the class called "fine gentlemen."

During breakfast one day, Lord Eardley was informed that a person had applied for a footman's place, then vacant. He was ordered into the room, and a double-refined specimen of the *genus* so detested by his lordship made his appearance. The manner of the man was extremely affected and consequential, and it was evident that my lord understood him at a glance; moreover, it was as evident that he determined to lower him a peg or two. "Well, my good fellow," said he, "what, you want a lackey's place, do you?"—"I came about an upper footman's situation, my lord," said the gentleman bridling up his head. "Oh, do ye, do ye?" replied Lord Eardley: "I keep no upper servants; all alike, all alike here."—"Indeed, my lord!" exclaimed the hireling, with an air of shocked dignity. "What department, then, am I to consider myself expected to fill?"—"Department! department!" quoth my lord in a tone like inquiry. "What capacity, my lord?" My lord repeated the word capacity, as if not understanding its application to the present subject. "I mean, my lord," explained the man, "what shall I be expected to do, if I take the situation?"—"Oh, you mean if you take the place. I understand you now," rejoined my lord; "why, you 're to do everything but sweep the chimneys, and clean the pig-sties, and those I do myself." The *gentleman* stared, scarcely knowing what to make of this, and seemed to wish himself out of the room; he however grinned a ghastly smile, and, after a short pause, inquired "what salary his lordship gave?"—"Salary! salary!" reiterated his incorrigible lordship; "don't know the word, don't know the word, my good man." Again the gentleman explained,—"I mean what wages?"—"Oh, wages!" echoed my lord; "what d' ye ask? what d' ye ask?" *Trip* regained his self-possession at this question, which looked like business, and considering for a few moments, answered—first stipulating to be found in hair-powder, and (on state occasions) silk-stockings, gloves, bags, and bouquets—that he should expect thirty pounds a year. "How much, how much?" demanded my lord rapidly. "Thirty pounds, my lord."—"Thirty pounds!" exclaimed Lord Eardley in affected amazement, "make it guineas and *I'll* live with *you!*" then ringing the bell, said to the servant who answered it, "Here, let out this gentleman; he 's too good for me, too good for me;" and turning to Mr. Mathews, who was much amused, said, as the man made his exit, "Conceited, impudent scoundrel! soon sent him off, soon sent him off, Master Matthew."

On one of these quiet visits to Belvidere, Mr. Mathews was one morning at church with Lord

Eardley. It happened that the preacher was an entire stranger to his lordship, and he listened to him for some time with great attention. The sermon, however, proving rather "lengthy," my lord became fidgety, and taking out his watch, looked at it from time to time in the most restless manner. At length patience utterly forsook him, and he questioned a gentleman in the adjoining pew, in a low tone, as to "who that long-winded parson was?" at the same time declaring he should never preach there again. The gentleman informed his lordship that the clergyman's name was Ball. At this information, Lord Eardley, quite off his guard, and without a moment's consideration, rose from his seat, watch in hand, which he elevated towards the pulpit, and to the consternation of the preacher and his congregation, called out in the appropriate tone and phrase of a team-driver bringing his leader to a halt, "Whoagh, Ball, whoagh!"

Lord Eardley could never at the theatre remember my relationship to Mr. Mathews. We were in the frequent habit of performing together the characters of father and daughter, as in "The Duenna," in which we played *Don Jerome* and *Louisa*; and in "Bluebeard," *Ibrahim* and *Fatima*. These pieces were very often performed at Drury Lane at this period, when Lord Eardley was a nightly frequenter of the green-room. He seemed while there utterly incapable of carrying his recollection from domestic history to dramatic fiction, or to separate the assumed from the actual characters. Thus he could never imagine, when he saw my husband's face covered with artificial wrinkles, that he was only *acting* the aged man and father. As Mr. Mathews was somewhat older than myself, this mistake always vexed and annoyed him. Lord Eardley would go up to him, and thus address him:—"Ah, Master Matthew, I'm glad to see your daughter looking so well."—"My wife is very well, my lord."—"Oh, true, true; she's your wife, she's your wife; so she is, so she is; I forgot." In a few minutes after this, he would tell me how well my father had been acting. "My husband, you mean, my lord."—"Ah, yes, yes; so he is, so he is; he's your husband; true, true; looks like your father in that dress; shouldn't wear it, shouldn't wear it; deceives one, deceives one!"

Everybody knows that Lord Eardley was a remarkably charitable man. One day he called upon my husband, at a period when his circumstances were anything but easy, (Mr. Mathews having barely surmounted his early difficulties,) and unconsciously tantalized him very much. Lord Eardley said he found himself with 500*l.* over and above his general charities, and was at a loss where to bestow it; and holding a bank note in his hand to that amount, he said, "Now tell me, Master Matthew, tell me some good way of disposing of this; want some deserving object to bestow it on: what shall I do with it, Master Matthew?" This was a trying question to a poor man, who was nevertheless too independent to talk of his poverty. I forget how my husband advised his lordship as to the disposal of his money, or whether he followed the advice he asked.

On the 24th of February Mr. Mathews was dining with a party of gentlemen at Mr. Richard Wilson's, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, when a servant, looking like him who

> Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
> And would have told him half his Troy was burnt,

entered the room, exclaiming, "Drury-lane Theatre is in flames, gentlemen!" A simultaneous rush followed, and all became eye-witnesses of that appalling fact. The actor flew to the spot, where indeed others of the theatre were already assembled. The fire had spread too widely to give a hope that its devastating power could be arrested. Mr. De Camp was full of lamentation at the loss of many valuables — really valuable in an intrinsic sense (I believe some diamond rings, &c.); but my husband thought of his darling wigs, collected with so much care and cost, some, as he believed, not replaceable at any price. Then, his ancient buckles, snuff-boxes, canes, shoes, stockings, most of which had furnished the commissioners of income-tax at York with food for so much diversion. All these to perish at one fell swoop was too much for him to think of without real regret—almost sorrow. What were the proprietors' feelings to his? the owners of uninteresting brick and mortar, put together within so few years as to want even the veneration that might have called forth the respect of a lover of antiquity. Could such loss be placed in comparison with his of the iron and brass buckles, which had been manufactured, some of them, a century back, at least,—and then the wigs once worn by Edwin and Garrick!

Upon a little reconnoitering, the two actors discovered that the fire had not yet actually taken possession of that part of the building where their dressing-room (which they had shared with some other performers in turn) was situated. They immediately rushed forward to attempt to save their respective property, and fearlessly groped through the smoke, which was so thick that they found their way, like Hamlet, "without their eyes." They were, however, eventually successful, and managed to save what each most prized; and as Mr. Mathews's valuables were contained in a large heavy table, with drawers and partitions, Mr. De Camp assisted him to drag it out. Surprise being afterwards expressed by somebody who looked at it, how they had found strength to carry it, they then ascertained that they could only with difficulty lift up for a moment what in the alarm and excitement of the night they had removed to a considerable distance.

This fire carried with it more lamentable results to the profession than even the destruction of such valuables as I have described. That fatal catastrophe, followed by a similar event on the 29th of September, the total destruction of Covent Garden Theatre, in the same unaccountable manner, may justly be considered as the overthrow of all theatrical prosperity.

Immediately after the first calamity, a meeting of the manager and principal performers took place, in order to consider how they could, by their joint exertions, provide for that portion of the company whose talents and services were of too humble a description to command employment elsewhere, and whose existence was dependent upon their weekly stipend. These people would be the most immediate sufferers, and indeed would be speedily in a state of starvation, unless provided for by their more fortunate brethren. To this end, most of the principal performers came to a decision to act at the Lyceum as soon as arrangements could be made. Mr. Mathews was the only performer whose individual powers would have rendered him independent of such a position. He had tried and proved the event of his attraction in the country when alone, by his last year's attempt, and could not but be aware that, under the circumstances, his interest lay far away from the scene of present action. But he did not hesitate,—much as it would have added to his home comforts,—to sacrifice selfish considerations, and to devote his talents in common with those of the other performers for the sake of his poorer brethren, although remuneration could not at the best exceed his former moderate salary, and might be altogether doubtful. Previously, however, to the period of opening the Lyceum, he filled up his time by occasional visits to the provinces, acting at Rochester, Canterbury, &c., till at length the Haymarket Theatre re-opened.

It was not to be expected that Mr. Mathews's constant intercourse and intimacy with Mr. Hook could exist without another effort of his pen for the purpose of giving scope to Mr. Mathews's peculiar talents, and for the display of which he was better able to frame a vehicle than any dramatist of that day. In the summer, therefore, of this year, the afterpieec of "Killing no Murder" was produced, in which Mr. Mathews's versatility and ventriloquy were most successfully brought into general notice. Mr. Hook knew exactly the measure of his friend's powers at that time, and had he continued to devote himself, after little more than boyhood, to dramatic writing, Mr. Mathews would not so long have had to regret the paucity of effective authorship, as regarded his own talents, under which he suffered for so many years. Of

Mr. Mathews's acting in the above-named piece, the following is a pithy account:

> Mathews was more than a Cerberus in this piece—he was a *Septimanus Gyas.* As the only soldier left in a battalion after a hard campaign, said, "that he was Lord Tyrawley's regiment," Mathews, in the same manner may say, that he is the farce and *dramatis personæ.* Both the mind and body of this ingenious and versatile performer were called into play; his ventriloquism was wonderful.

Mr. Hook was equally complimentary with regard to his friend's performance, for in the preface to the piece he thus expresses himself:

> To Mathews all my thanks are inadequate; but as I am unable to do justice to his professional talents, already so well known and appreciated, I may perhaps be allowed to say that all the approbation he receives in public as an actor, he fully deserves in private as a man.
>
> THEODORE HOOK.

The truth is, that the first act of *Buskin* was a sketch, which Mr. Mathews filled up *ad libitum,* and from this it became much the fashion amongst authors to trust to his working up their "raw material," and thus he seldom got a ready-made part given to him in a new piece.

All the arrangements for the opening of the Lyceum with the Drury-lane company were completed by September. But as Mr. Mathews's appearance was not required during the first week, he accompanied a favourite cousin of his, Mr. William Manly, to Portsmouth, whose ship was stationed there, ready to sail. The following communication records another instance, in addition to those already given, of the power my husband possessed of representation,— the exercise of which he found so irresistible when prompted by the suggestions of friends or circumstances.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Portsmouth, Sept. 24th, 1809.

I have only just time to save the post; but I thought it would be a satisfaction to you to hear that I arrived safely. We slept last night at Godalming, proceeded on our journey this morning, and arrived about three o'clock. Nothing worth mentioning occurred on the road, except a little fun at the inn where we slept, occasioned by Manly informing the landlord that I was a madman. I passed for a major in the army, wounded in the head in Spain, and frightened all the waiters and servants. Lord Ormond was in the house, and, attracted by the general alarm, came with his relation, Mr. Butler, to have a peep at me. He was near betraying me and spoiling the joke; but soon entered into it, and supped with us, enjoying it amazingly. Let me hear from you by return, and tell me all you know about the Lyceum. The *Orion* is here, and I shall make a point of seeing Michael. God bless you! CHARLES MATHEWS.

On the 25th the Lyceum opened, under the licence of the Lord Chamberlain, and the joint management of Messrs. Arnold and Raymond. The success was very great, but more confirmed as the season advanced.

All theatrical people and play-goers will remember the great effect produced by the revival on this occasion, after thirty years, of the comedy of "The Hypocrite," and the fine acting which made it so popular and attractive. I am justified in asserting that Mr. Mathews's *Maw-worm* stood next in comic excellence and truth to Mr. Dowton's exquisite performance of *Doctor Cantwell.* The following testimony of the general impression bears out my assertion :

> ### LYCEUM THEATRE.
>
> Mr. Mathews kept the house in a roar of laughter by his apt management of *Maw-worm.* It was an admirable representation of "*Praise God Barebones,*"—an exact portraiture of one of those ignorant enthusiasts who lose sight of all good while they are vainly hunting after an ideal perfectibility.

Mrs. Edwin and Mrs. Orger were the *Charlotte* and *Young Lady Lambert.* These two beautiful women and accomplished actresses, by their excellent performance, made the comedy perfect. In order to complete this account of the performance of "The Hypocrite," it may be best to introduce here one of the detached portions of my husband's Autobiography :—

At this period spencers came into wear.* To those who may not remember the fashion, it may be necessary to describe this curious coatee. It was a garment calculated only to guard the upper portion of the person from cold. It buttoned close up to the throat, but extended no further down than the hips, the skirts being entirely omitted, and the lower man necessarily left unguarded; it was, therefore, of course only calculated for pedestrians. It was a lucky fancy for the actors, who profited by the fashion. Bannister made the first hit in "The Prize," when, on being asked where his tailor lived, he replied, "Upon the *skirts* of the town."

The mountebanks of the conventicle took advantage of it also, and made their hits. I once heard one of the unwashed tribe utter an elegant and appropriate sarcasm upon the raging folly. So fleeting is the fame of an actor, that there are but few even of my own acquaintance, and those principally behind the scenes, who are aware that this accidental circumstance gave rise to "the sermon," as it is called, which is now supposed by the unread in the drama to be part and parcel of the play of "The Hypocrite;" and that my excellent friend, Liston, is entirely indebted to me for giving him the hint to perform *Mawworm*, since made his own, and on which a part of his well-earned fame has been founded. On my secession from the regular drama, in consequence of my unfortunate accident, he took a fancy to this part; but I shall relate the circumstance to which I allude. The play was revived after the destruction of Drury-lane Theatre by fire, at the Lyceum, to which theatre the company were driven in their distress; and "being burnt out from over the way," the business was carried on there—Dowton, *Dr. Cantwell.* It was a complete hit. My early knowledge of the family of the *Maw-worms* gave me an opportunity of depicting with truth, at all events, the tones and manners of such a character. It was highly effective; but as the author, or rather translator, Bickerstaff, has given him only one scene in the play—for the few lines in the last are so trifling, that he is almost a cipher—I was discontented with the insignificant situation in the concluding scene, and made bold to try an experiment, directly in the teeth of the advice of my immortal instructor, who says, "Let your clowns say no more than is set down for them." Finding our play firmly established with the public, I concocted a speech or harangue; and cautiously keeping my secret, I quietly retired one night (the third or fourth of its run) from the characters concerned with *Cantwell*, when he boldly declares himself to be a villain, and at his exit suddenly presented myself behind the screen, perched on a table which I had caused to be placed there, and, to the amazement of my brother actors, bawled out, exactly in the tone of dear old daddy Berridge—*

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* Introduced, I believe, by Lord Spencer for a wager, he having asserted, while commenting on the absurdities of fashion, that if any person of condition were to appear in only the upper part of his coat, the whimsical example would be followed.—A. M.

"Stay, ye infatuated wretches! ye know not what ye do! the doctor is innocent! Touch not a hair of his precious head—do not ruffle a curl of his gracious wig! I repeat, he is innocent! But ye will be the sufferers!

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* This sermon is put down from memory, a blank being left in Mr. Mathews's manuscript where it ought to have been, and Mr. Liston, who has kindly furnished me with it, is in doubt whether he has recollected the whole; but I can answer for that portion given being correct.—A. M.

I have one great—one glorious consola-ation! ye will all go to the devil for what ye are doing! This is my consola-ation; and when it is too late, ye will repent. When ye see me mount and leave ye to your fate, ye will want my aid. Ye will cling to me—ye will try to lay hold of the skirts of my coat; but I will fling ye all,—for I will wear a Spencer!*"

So great was the effect at this unexpected address, that it was ever after an indispensable feature; and such was the reputation of our revival of the play in London, that Dowton, Mrs. Edwin, and myself, were engaged to act the three characters at Liverpool. This sermon, as it has since been designated, was of course expected and delivered. Powerful as the effect had been in London, it was tame, compared to the extraordinary sensation it created at Liverpool. I was quite unprepared for such uproarious demonstrations of delight, and at a loss to account for their expression — roars of laughter, cries of bravo, and at length *encore*. This was the first time the speech had been so honoured (though the precedent was followed in London on my return). The repetition of the play was as loudly called for, and the call was frequently obeyed. Upon my leaving the stage (the first night) the proprietor, Mr. Lewis, shook me by the hand, congratulated me on this hit, and said, "What a lucky thought! who put it into your head?—where did you hear of him?" —"Whom?" said I. "Why, Spencer."—"Of Spencer?" said I: "why, you don't understand my point. It is an allusion to an ephemeral fashion of twenty-five years back; and you imagined that I was personal?" — "Why, of course I did," replied he. "Are you really ignorant, then, of the fact, and is this only a singular coincidence? Perhaps the most popular dissenting preacher ever known in Liverpool is at this moment drawing together the most crowded congregations in the largest chapel in the town, and his name is Spencer, and the regular church-goers thought it a most excellent hit, and have applauded it accordingly." I had never heard of him, and certainly the accidental circumstance was curious. "Never mind," said he; "we shall have as many overflows as Spencer." When my lameness gave me small hopes of return to the stage, Liston expressed to me his wish to act *Maw-worm* in the country, as he was then going a tour; but was surprised upon reading the part as printed to find how inefficient it was without the extra aid of my screen harangue, he himself hardly being aware of my being the first interpolator. I then furnished him with the address I had uttered, and which has gained him such notoriety. But I have often smiled bitterly at the evanescent nature of an actor's fame. A short period only was necessary to cause the effect to be forgotten which I certainly had originally produced in that character both in and out of London, and which I had flattered myself would not so soon fail to be remembered, for it certainly was a portrait from the life. I have repeatedly been amused since by questions on the subject, such as "Did you ever see Liston in *Maw-worm?*"—and "Of course, you have heard him preach his sermon? I'm told there never was anything but a song *encored* before that speech. Is it true that he was the first that ever thought of it, and that it is not in the play? They say Weston did not introduce it." Others have said, "I believe Liston was the original *Maw-worm*."

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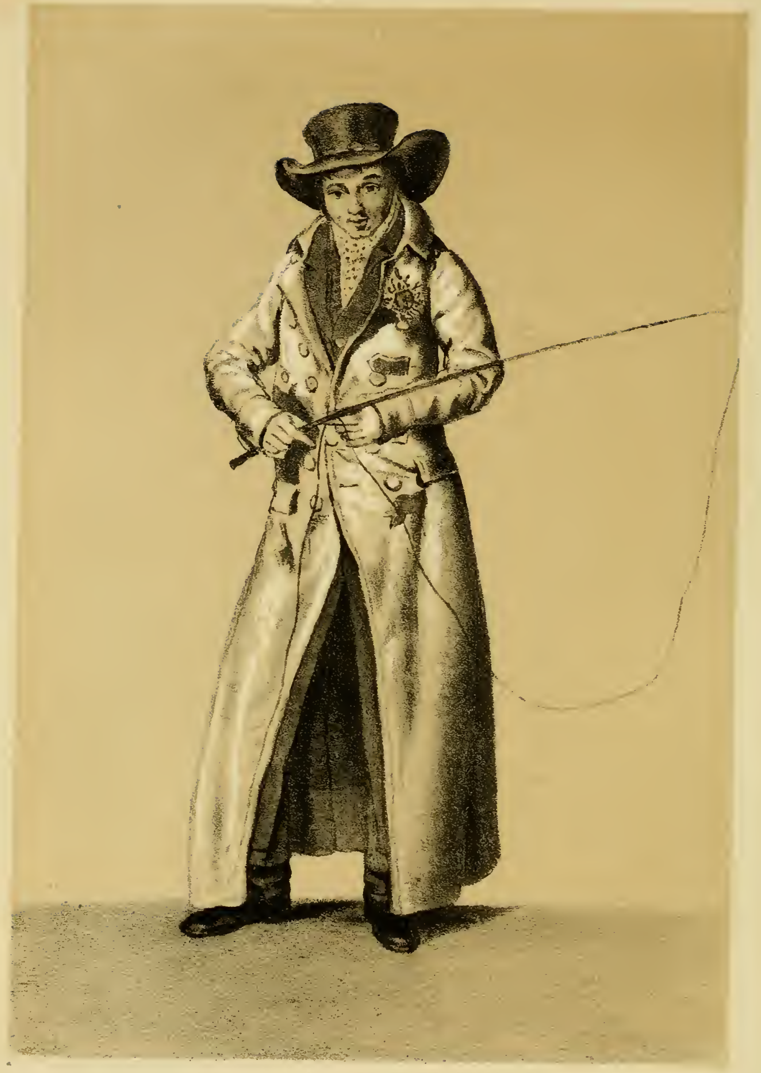
* The lines in *italics* are those quoted from the preacher mentioned by Mr. Mathews.—A. M.

At this period the mania for driving "Four-in-hand" was at its acmé. A certain number of gentlemen formed themselves into a society, called, in the slang of the day, the "Bang up Club." The members of it were men of fashion, and generally possessing large fortunes. They had carriages built like stage-coaches, which they drove themselves; and to preclude the suspicion of any sordid motive for so doing, each gentleman allowed his coachman to sit on his left-hand upon the box, with the privilege of witnessing, at his ease, his master's skill in "handling the ribands." These carriages were not "licensed to carry" even one inside, and in order to satisfy everybody upon this point, the blinds were invariably drawn up.

The costume of each gentleman consisted of a bottle-green body-coat, a milk-white double-breasted great coat, reaching to the heels, several large capes, and buttons of mother-of-pearl, as large as crown pieces; a many-flowered *bouquet* in a button-hole at the side; upon the head a low-crowned broad-brimmed hat, with a broad riband and buckle, the hair sleeked down under it, coachman like. On certain days, the members of the "Four-in-hand Club" met at their leader's door, and proceeded with their vehicles to Salt-hill, or some other agreeable place within a drive, to dine and return at night. Their horses were of the most perfectly beautiful kind that could be purchased.

It was not to be expected that those who catch



On Stone by Aug.te Hervieu

A Ducote's Lithog.r St Martins L.e

M.r MATHEWS.

Prime! Bang up

"the manners living as they rise," could overlook this extraordinary furor while it raged, and a farce called "Hit or Miss" was produced from the pen of Mr. Pocock, with a mere outline (as it often happened) for Mr. Mathews to fill up. His character was of course the one that touched upon the peculiarities of the club, and he presented a faithful copy of its dress, using all the slang of that day, which I fear was too often employed, at the time, by those not "unto the manner born." It was, however, very amusing in itself, and the character of *Dick Cypher* was a faithful copy of a young man of good family (then in the law), who contrived to mix up this jargon with the most gentlemanlike manner and character. He was delighted at Mr. Mathews's representing him in this anonymous way, and furnished him with most of the terms used. It was a fair hit at "the fancy." The members of the club took this "show up" with great good humour. When the piece was in its first attraction, they sometimes invited Mr. Mathews to accompany them in their drives, when in their full costume and cavalcade, and he generally was preferred to a seat on the box, for which the nominal coachman was displaced; nay, they seemed as if they were anxious to prove that his representation of them had not given offence.

Notwithstanding this, it is not improbable that this pointed though inoffensive satire caused a more speedy termination of this extraordinary whim, than would otherwise have taken place; and perhaps gave the club an excuse for dropping an expense, which even to men of large fortune must have been felt as enormous.

The great feature of the whole of Mr. Mathews's representation, however, was the "Prime Bang-up" song, which remained popular until it was succeeded by some newer fashion of expression amongst the ingenious inventors of such quaint vocabularies.

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* The following account of the Four-in-hand Club appeared at the time:—

Large nosegays, like sixteen-string Jack.
Prime Bang up!

Yesterday, Cavendish Square, Mortimer Street, and the avenues adjoining, were closely occupied long before noon by fashionables and amateurs of the whip, all anxious to witness the spring meeting of the Whip Club. The windows of the nobility displayed a brilliant assemblage of beautiful females. Mr. Charles Buxton's front drawing-room in particular was crowded with rank and fashion, and the houses adjoining were the resort of elegant company. The ladies were dressed *à-la-mode*, but the weather was cool, and unfavourable to light summer costume. Every dashing pupil of the new school appeared anxious to be seen. Tandems, barouches, landaus, and, in short, every tasteful vehicle in London, was driven to the scene.

About twelve o'clock, the principal whips were in motion; Sir C. Bamfylde and Sir Wedderburne Webster arrived first, and pulled up in Portland Street. The "set-out" of these gentlemen excited admiration: their cattle and harness were com-

The ensuing month brought the following reiterated offer from Mr. Arnold.

TO MR. MATHEWS.

September 7th, 1810.
DEAR SIR, 31, Golden Square.

The Lord Chamberlain having renewed the licence granted last season to Mr. T. Sheridan, myself, and Mr. Greville, for the benefit of the Drury-lane concern, and which was obtained with the consent and approbation of the trustees of that property; I have the pleasure again to offer you and Mrs. Mathews an engagement,* and have only delayed repeating that offer until those difficulties were removed which induced you to decline two former invitations, and which I am happy to understand no longer exist. I am, dear sir, very truly yours,

S. J. ARNOLD.

plete, their servants in appropriate livery, and the whole made a most dashing appearance. Captain Agar,† and Mr. Wallace, were also *prime* in *minutiæ*.

Mr. Buxton, the leader, put his cattle to a short time before one o'clock. When his barouche was brought out, it was admired for its light and elegant appearance. Having taken the reins, dressed in a dark green frock, with metal buttons, white leathers and boots, a horn was sounded for the whips to prepare for the ranks. Mr. Buxton then drew round from Edward Street, to his door in Mortimer Street, where the cavalcade formed in the following order:—

1. Mr. Buxton, leading whip, four blood bays.
2. Lord Hawke, four bright bays.
3. Captain Agar, four iron greys.
4. Sir C. Bamfylde, four roans.
5. Sir John Rogers, four blacks.

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* The term was to be five years.—A. M.

† Since Sir Felix Agar.

At the close of the Haymarket, the reopening of the Lyceum found Mr. Mathews there, in pursuance of his original undertaking, and he was rapturously greeted on his reappearance in *Maw-worm.* On this moderately sized stage, as at the Haymarket, his acting was seen to most advantage; for at this time, perhaps, his manner had not acquired breadth sufficient, or his voice enough power, to fill the vast sphere he appeared in during the former winter seasons; yet, notwithstanding his growing popularity, he still retained his resolution to quit the present management. To one accustomed to the old *régime*, the new seemed divested of all comfort and respecta-

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6. Sir W. Webster, four chesnuts.
7. Mr. Spicer, four greys.
8. Captain Morgan, four bays.

The vehicles were remarkable for the uniformity which prevailed in all their appendages. Each barouche had two on the box, and two servants behind. About one o'clock, the drivers mounted with their friends. Mr. Buxton took up Mr. Mathews, the performer, who has thus perhaps an opportunity of acquiring some additional knowledge of that sort of character he has so ably sustained on the boards of the Lyceum. The horn was again sounded, and the leader started in grand style, followed by the rank. When the cavalcade left Cavendish Square, the leader smacked his whip, and gave the password, "Bang-up for Salt-hill." They then drove off at a sharp trot. This meeting was conducted in the true "coachee" style. The whips, as usual, dined together at Salt-hill, and we did not learn that any accident occurred during the day. The veteran, Sir John Lade, did not start with his brethren of the whip, and on the whole the meeting was not so numerous as on former occasions.

bility; besides which, his circumstances demanded that he should make a bold effort to set himself free from some pecuniary difficulties, which at the beginning of this year had crept over him imperceptibly. These difficulties were occasioned by the somewhat inconsiderate purchase of a cottage, which, in his overweening love for a rural residence, he had prematurely bought of General Bradshaw, in the King's Road, Fulham, although he could not conceal from himself that the first outlay and expense of supporting it must inevitably prevent him from enjoying it except by snatches. To this was added the resignation of one third of his regular income in London, owing to my retirement from the stage at the end of the last Haymarket season—a circumstance which, however desirable as a matter of feeling to us both, was altogether imprudent. Mr. Mathews, it is true, had long meditated taking me from the stage; and, after the unfortunate fire at Drury-lane Theatre, the new interests and influences which came into play, decided the long-pending question as to my retirement; and I quitted the stage.

When his term at the Lyceum expired, he set off to his several engagements in Liverpool, Ireland, &c., leaving me in a sort of Noah's Ark, which sheltered every bird and beast that he could collect before he went. His benefit at the Lyceum, on the 3rd of June, proved good: on this occasion he performed *Trudge* in "Incle and Yarico;" a scene from "My Grandmother," in which he played *Dickey Gossip,* after the manner of the late Mr. Suett; and in the afterpiece of "The Critic," the two widely-differing characters of *Puff* and *Sir Fretful Plagiary;* but his receipts, though liberal for a small theatre, were not more than sufficient to liquidate a portion of the claims which an inadequate income too often creates where youth is uncalculating and generous, and when there is little judgment and less experience to direct good principle and honest intention.

As soon as Mr. Mathews's intention of not returning to the Lyceum was announced, (that being then the only regular winter theatre,) he received divers proposals and applications; amongst them, one from Mr. Elliston, who, after the fire at Drury-lane, had headed a minor theatre of his own.

TO MR. CHARLES MATHEWS.

DEAR MATHEWS, April 6th, 1811.

I have reconsidered our conversation of Thursday evening, and if you are serious upon the matter as *I* am, the affair may be brought to a speedy decision.

By the period of the close of the Lyceum Theatre, I will have a piece ready, in which your particular powers shall be shown to the best advantage, and I shall require your efforts for a space of six weeks; for which period I will give you 50*l.* per week, and a 100*l.* note for the advantage of your name at a benefit, you giving me all the assistance you may be pleased to make for the advantage of my receipt on that night. I trust this proposal will be as liberal as you can have expected, and if no impediment beyond a pecuniary consideration should arise, I shall be very willing to close the negotiation as speedily as possible, that proper preparation may be made for your appearance on the boards of my theatre.

Yours, truly, R. W. Elliston.

It may be asked why Mr. Mathews, under his circumstances, rejected such obviously liberal terms. The answer simply is, that he did not choose to appear in any except the patent theatres, and in the regular drama, which hitherto he had seen sustained with a respectability which had, it is true, received a shock, but which he believed was not overthrown; and he was too fond of his profession to do anything that he conceived would disgrace a first-rate professor. At the period to which I allude the drama was considered, even by the nobility and the fashionable world, not quite as a matter of indifference. Such being the respect in which the legitimate drama was held by the public, Mr. Mathews felt his own position in it ought to be maintained; and he, therefore, persisted in his scheme of visiting the provinces rather than retrograde in London. Accordingly, in June he acted at Liverpool, where he had not appeared since his first engagement there in the season of 1803, and then as one of the regular company.

On the 21st he commenced this engagement, and his reception was not the less warm, it may be supposed, in consequence of the well-known approval of a London audience since his first appearance in that town. Indeed, his matured powers were rapturously acknowledged; and in his many subsequent visits to Liverpool his popularity was to the end unimpaired.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Mathews's letters from Liverpool and Dublin.—His first appearance in Ireland, 1794.—The Irish *Barber*, &c.

I AM now on the point of entering upon the most embarrassing portion of my undertaking—namely, that of selecting from my husband's letters addressed to myself what may not be deemed impertinent, trivial, or irrelevant. From the present period, when he had occasion to correspond with me, he usually wrote once a day—always three times a week, and generally very long letters. Such of these letters as are still in existence, I feel to be so necessary as links in the chain of his life, that, though not recommended by literary merit, they will, I hope, be interesting, as giving an insight into the private and domestic character and habits of a man so generally admired in public. Letters have been termed the "chart and compass of biography;" and perhaps when written familiarly and confidentially, under the impulse of every mood and circumstance, without design to their being read by any other than the person addressed, concealment is impossible. Believing this to be the case, I feel assured that Mr. Mathews's letters will do more to show his real disposition than mere assertions from one who may naturally be suspected of a bias. They will also tell of his whereabout from time to time, without interruptions from my pen, unless as a key-note or chorus.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Liverpool, June 22nd, 1811.

I hope you recollect that I did not promise to write to you till after I had played. I arrived here on Thursday evening, completely fatigued, as (though I did not tell you my intention) I was resolved not to encounter the horrors of the inside of a coach for two hundred miles: I therefore took an outside place. The cold on the second day was more like that of Christmas than June. Nothing remarkable occurred, excepting a visit that we passengers paid to the extraordinary woman who has lived four years without food, at Tetbury, in Derbyshire. She has a pleasant countenance, which has suffered but little from starvation; but her body is not much bigger than my arm. In fact, nothing but the back-bone and skin are left; her lower limbs are dead and useless, but she is as likely to go on four years longer in the same way, as she was to continue her system after the first month. She always sits upright in bed; constantly dozes, but does not sleep, and never feels the least inclination to eat or drink.

We opened here last night in "The Hypocrite," and "Killing no Murder," to a very fine house; and my reception was really enthusiastic throughout. *Maw-worm* was a most unusual hit, I am told. As to my songs, their reception was not mere applause; for such was the effect of them, that the uproar was really more like the "O.P. Row" than any I have ever been accustomed to. The actors were quite in spirits at so good a house.

Dowton and I lodge in the same house, next door to the theatre, where we are very comfortable. Pray write by return of post, for I am most anxious to hear from you. Oh, how I sigh after my home! but I must resolutely go through my work. Remember me to all. My best love to my dear, dear Charles. God bless you.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Liverpool, June 26th, 1811.

I have a very hard fag here, playing five nights, and rehearsing all the morning. I have been at the theatre since ten, and it is now two, and the post goes out at three. We continue to attract, and, I flatter myself, to please. "Hit or Miss" last night—great affair. I have found already the value of keeping the songs to myself—those unpublished being so amazingly effective. I never was more gratified than by the effect last night. My benefit is on next Wednesday. God bless you and my darling Charles.
CHARLES MATHEWS.

P.S. Let me hear more of dear Charles in the next. How are all the animals? You never mention Neptune. Is Muff recovered? How go on the chickens? All these will be interesting and amusing to me. Pray don't deny yourself visiters for the sake of economy. It is necessary you should have society.

It is a popular error that actors earn their money easily, and that no labour attends their vocation. This mistake has led many an idle, unqualified person into the profession, and afterwards *upon* the profession, in the way of charity. According to the preceding letter, in a moderate morning's work four hours are occupied in the wear and tear of mental as well as bodily power; and in the evening, from six till twelve the performer's mind and person are again upon the continual stretch of anxiety and fatigue. Ten hours out of the common labourer's term for work is here accounted for; but it often happens that the whole twelve are so occupied; in addition to which, many, after their long day and night of toil and excitement, are under the necessity of stealing hours from requisite repose, in order to acquire matter for future occasion. Little wonder should there be that so few excel, when often there is scarcely time allowed for more than learning the *words* of their characters. How, then, can study, without which excellence was never attained, or popularity preserved, be expected? It is a common observation of simple people, after witnessing any striking performance of length, (and this was often applied to Mr. Mathews's peculiar talent,) "I wonder how he remembers it all." They should rather wonder how he found time in the first instance to become acquainted with what his memory afterwards furnished to his hearers. Mr. Mathews's habit, from his earliest professional life, (which commenced at the age of seventeen,) was to sit up all night, and as many nights as he found it requisite, to study for any particular purpose, for he *really* studied. Can it be a matter, then, of surprise that such fatigue should at last show itself in a complicated form? His life was that of a blacksmith, with this difference, that his mind constantly lifted an anvil as well as his body.

TO MR. G. H. ROBINS.

My dear Robins, Liverpool, July 1st, 1811.

I am really and sincerely not only hurt, but grieved for you, my good and best friend.* I know no circumstance, unconnected with my own family, that could have so much distressed me, as hearing of anything likely to give you uneasiness; and I have only to curse my hard fate that I have not the means of doing what my feelings point out to me as my duty, that of showing my gratitude to you for all the kindnesses you have bestowed upon me. I declare to my God, that I have to-day felt more for your situation than for the temporary embarrassment it has caused myself; but I am afraid that good fellows like you too often meet with such return for their friendship. I never hear of anybody dying or breaking in Jack Johnstone's or Munden's debt; but they, to be sure, never lend or give.

However, "Providence never forsakes the good man's child." By a strange turn, my benefit is Wednesday.

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* Mr. Robins had, I believe, met with a severe pecuniary loss. —A. M.

Now, though Liverpool is ruined, and nothing but long faces are to be seen, I have an immense box-plan already; and I expect a good house: a great house, I fear, and am told by my friends, is out of the question. The Americans were an amazing support to the theatre, and they have vanished. I pay 60*l.* for expenses, and have all above. Now, I think I shall clear about 150*l.*, which for the times is immense. Before I came and witnessed the change, I expected, mark me, to clear 220*l.* or to 230*l.*

I leave my fate in the hands of my three best friends on earth, namely, my wife, Mr. Manly,* and yourself. You will, I hope, meet and consult. You know all my secrets. In about a month I shall have 300*l.* certain in Dublin, and if I don't add considerably to that, I can only say, I'll stay away till I do. If at that time, or hereafter, in consequence of your losses you will condescend to make use of that or any part of it, I can only say, my dear George Robins, *you* will do *me* a favour; and if you do not meet with many other such offers, I can only say, there is an end to justice, and "success to swindling!" Seriously, I condole with you much on the calamity of which you have informed me, and rely on your kindness to do what you can towards extricating me from the disappointment it has occasioned me.

Ever yours, most truly,

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Liverpool, July 11th, 1811.

I am detained here to-day rather unexpectedly by the delay of the master of the packet, and the wind being unfavourable; to-morrow, however, we positively sail. Kemble is playing here, and is attractive, but has not beat our best houses, nor come near my benefit; I am, therefore, more than ever flattered with the receipt of my house. I am writing this at Mr. Parke's, from whom and his family, tell Young, (with my best thanks for his introduction,) I have received every possible civility: indeed the people here have been very kind to me. Tell Young also that his friend Mulock is here to-day, and sails with me to-morrow. I have in him a pleasant and useful friend in Dublin, and have several letters from friends in this town, which will be guide sufficient for all my wishes there, even if the General with the prize neckcloth* does not write. I thank you for your particular account of the animals; but why is Cockatoo omitted?

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* Mr. William Manly, already mentioned.

Pray write to me the day after you receive this, and direct to Dublin, Theatre Royal, Crow-street. Write me a long letter, even if it be full of nonsense; for a letter from you is, as you may conceive, a source of real pleasure to me. I hope you are in better spirits. I am most deplorably low at times. My work here has been a terrible toil to me; but anything is better than to be in debt, from which I am resolved to be free at any rate or risk. Pray be circumstantial about dear Charles. I really fear they half starve him at the school.† Remember the MS. to Arnold. Who played *Sir Fretful* at the Haymarket? I never saw "The Critic" tell so well as here. I have only room to send love to dear little Twig. God bless you.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

On the 14th of July he arrived in Dublin, his first visit there since the days of his boyhood and starvation in 1794. The "London star," assured as he had been for a long time by approving audiences, and confirmed in talent and reputation, felt not more exultation at the expectation of his present reception than when first, "elate and gay, he stepped forth to take possession of the world," full of hope, and unsuspicious of the struggles and hardships in store for him. His own letters on this occasion, and some contemporary criticism, will best tell the effect of his reappearance in Ireland, and "all that did him befal therein."

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* General Montague Mathew, who always wore a prodigious quantity of muslin round his throat.—A. M.

† A preparatory school in the neighbourhood.—A. M.

During the whole of his life Mr. Mathews collected, and preserved with the nicest care, all that was published of other principal performers, but never sought or kept anything about himself. The same negligence was shown in his vast collection of engravings. He piqued himself upon possessing every impression extant of every print representing actors and actresses generally, from the days of Shakspeare, but had none of himself but what happened to have been sent as presents from artists or publishers, so that I have to regret that I do not possess many good likenesses of him, now not easily to be obtained, as well as much matter of interest relating to him. His first communication to me from Dublin gives a whimsical description of his voyage from Liverpool.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dublin, July 13th, 1811.

I arrived here yesterday, after a most disagreeable passage, but extremely well. I was not at all sick; but I believe I was the only person who could say so. We left Liverpool on Friday at four o'clock, and landed on Sunday morning at six o'clock. We had about a hundred and twenty of the very lowest order of Irish,—haymakers, pig-drivers, &c., with their wives and children. Had they been of any other country, it would have been intolerable; but their unceasing good-humour and drollery kept us constantly amused. Had I been a shorthand writer I could have taken down a folio volume of odd sayings, which perhaps would not bear repetition without the accompaniment of brogue and gesture, but yet were a perpetual source of amusement to me during a disgusting voyage; for such a collection of villanous smells, sick passengers, squalling children, &c., never was witnessed, I believe, before. I have endeavoured to treasure up some of their dialogue, which will give you some idea of the rest. First, imagine men, women, and children together in the hold of the vessel, one upon another higgledy-piggledy:—"Arrah, Pat! get off my legs."—"Where are they? Sure, there's no end to them."—"Get out of this, then."—"I'll call the captain to stop the ship till I get justice done to my legs."—"Barney, have you got my knife?"—"Sorrow the bit."—"I say you have."—"Oh, what a fuss about a knife with niver a back or an edge!"—"Hold your brogue, Pat. I can't light my pipe for your arguments. I'm like the crow among the jackdaws; I've got into bad company."—"Come, don't be coming your univarsity language over us."—"Oh, then, I'm not college-bred, but I'm spoon edecated."—"Sir, would you have the remarkable kindness to get up aloft, and look if you can see Dublin?"—"Oh, faith, then, it's too wet."—"I'd lend you my top-coat, only I have not got one; and if I had I'd want it myself."

Mr. Mulock, my fellow-passenger, was of great service to me, having interest with the custom-house. All my luggage was passed without examination, which was an immense accommodation. I come out to-morrow in *Lord Ogleby* and *Buskin*. The theatre here is beautiful.

Ever yours, CHARLES MATHEWS.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dublin, July 18th, 1811.

I was quite in raptures at the sight of your letters this morning, having been so many days without hearing from you. You are the best of good wives for sending me such a long letter: it was quite a treat. I have delivered the General's letter this morning. I am glad he did not write more, for my only misery already is knowing too many people. I have half a dozen invitations for every day, but I select the quiet domestic parties, if I can. Mulock is the best of fellows. I have renewed my acquaintance with the only persons I knew here in the days of my starvation, and who are now prosperous people, a Mr. and Mrs. H——; he French, she Yorkshire. I went with them yesterday to their country-house at Dunleary, four miles from Dublin, in one of the most enchanting spots upon earth. I cut all parties, and dined with them alone. Went three miles to sea in the evening in a boat. Fished: caught whitings, eels, flounders. Returned; walked. Bathed this morning, and returned at eleven o'clock. Rehearsal. Incledon and I have no trouble in providing,* for it is impossible to dine at home. At present I am only acting three times a-week — pleasant enough, but takes up too much of my time. I expected Incledon and Mrs. Dickons would act together about four nights, instead of which they act the alternate nights — no bad compliment to my attractions. My first night was better than any of theirs, and the best stock-night* since the opening in the winter. But here there is nothing but croaking, like Liverpool. " All ruined ;"—" hot weather ;"—" everybody out of town," and so on. However, there are plenty left to come to the theatre, that I can see. I opened on Tuesday night in *Lord Ogleby* and *Buskin.* The former went as well as I could wish ; but in the farce, I can only say, I wish you had been there to witness it : I cannot describe it. I was in tip-top spirits with my reception, and played my best. The account I gave you of Liverpool was just the different calculation between the warmth of English and Irish. I spoke the line from Rolla —" We want no change !"— like Kemble. This was the first signal for row. It is no exaggeration to say, I had five rounds of applause. Then I gave them a touch of Lewis, which was equally noticed ; but when I gave them his " whoop !" it touched the proper chord, for it is precisely the noise which they make here in the galleries when they are more than usually pleased. It was immediately echoed in chorus, and at my exit, " A clap for Mathyes !" was proposed, and three rounds were given. In the next scene I sung " The Mail-coach." At the end of the first verse I had another round of " whoops !" A universal encore ensued, and it was loudly called for a third time, but they expressed their disapprobation, not by hissing, as in England. But, " no, no ! — too much !"—I could hardly keep my countenance at the oddity of their noises, whenever I hit them. The whole farce went equally well, and better than ever I saw it before. "Bartlemy Fair" was as great a hit as the other. In short, I never played to such a delighted audience in my life. You may suppose I was highly gratified, particularly as I know a London name is not always a passport here. I received congratulations after it was over from everybody, as if it were a first night in London, and all my future reputation depended on my reception. It is universally agreed that no farce ever went off so well on a first night in Dublin, and also that mine is an unusual hit. Ever yours,

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* Mr. Incledon, who had taken up his abode at the same hotel with him.

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* Nights that are not " benefits."

CHARLES MATHEWS.

During Mr. Mathews's first visit to Ireland in 1794, Daly's *cruelty-system* of not paying the salaries to those whose humble position in the theatre precluded their insisting upon redress, placed him at length in the most unpleasant dilemma imaginable. His very proper reluctance to solicit pecuniary favours from strangers, and his natural pride in rejecting the alternative of applying to his own family, thereby confessing the fallacious attempt he had made to live independently of his father in the profession which he had chosen in opposition to parental wishes, left him in a really distressing situation. He would not confess the starving condition into which his headlong predilection had cast him, which not only shut him out from any appeal to his relations, but from seeking temporary assistance from his friends, whose advice he had equally opposed. Nay, even to those upon the spot, who knew the extent of Daly's avarice, (for it was notorious that he did not want the means of paying his performers, since he himself indulged in every luxury,) he felt equally unwilling to confess his want of resources. He had become deeply indebted to his landlord, whom he had put off from week to week, as Daly had led him on with hopes of payment, and the man became daily more importunate.

One night, at the close of the performance, the poor, penniless, supperless young man, returning to his lodging, found the door closed against him! His landlord appeared at the window of the first floor, and announced his determination not to let him in, unless he could assure him of immediate payment of his arrears. In vain the poor debtor entreated — in vain he endeavoured to make his creditor relent. He then reminded the man that he held a security for ultimate payment in his whole wardrobe (not altogether despicable,) and a fine violin, itself sufficient to indemnify him. These were all offered to be formally delivered over to him, and might be deemed more than equivalent to his claim; but nothing would move the stern creditor, who was so steeled against his young lodger, that nothing less than the current coin of the realm would satisfy him. A change of linen was then entreated, until the next evening gave him power to claim the rest of his property. Even this small boon was resolutely refused, and the window was at length abruptly closed! The poor, houseless, miserable being, stood for a time utterly incapable of thought. At length it occurred to him to seek the wretched abode of the hairdresser, who daily frizzed and powdered his head. He had a twofold claim upon this man's attention, for his wife was his laundress. When he reached the house he made known his destitute condition, and the poor people listened to his story with every demonstration of kindness. After a moment's whisper with her husband, the wife, "on hospitable cares intent," left the shop where they were standing, and, just as Mr. Mathews had requested leave to stretch himself upon the floor of their small tenement for the night, the poor woman returned, her face smiling with benevolence, and in a tone of exultation informed "the master" that *his bed was ready!* It was vain for him to refuse. He knew they had but two apartments — the little shop, and the "parlour," which, like the cobler's stall, served them also for "kitchen and hall,"— he would not consent to occupy their only bed. After a long war of kindly words, however, the young comedian was absolutely hustled by husband and wife into their little dormitory, where he saw in one corner a three-legged table, with some "*cowld pratees*,' in their native jackets displayed, a cup full of salt, and a whiskey-bottle, by way of *persuader* to this inviting repast; and on the other side of the room stood a narrow, ricketty bedstead, let down by hinges from its protecting shell, displaying a patched but clean pillow-case, and a "turnover" of a few inches of linen, which gave similar evidences of cleanliness and industry. Here, after another struggle on all sides for supremacy of generosity, the barber and his wife were the victors. It was, in fact, two to one against the comedian; he found himself overpowered by numbers, and was eventually locked into his bed-chamber by the hand of his hospitable little barber, when he and his wife, doubtless, occupied the space behind the counter—the only one large enough to receive them in a longitudinal position. When the young guest had given way to his melancholy reflections, and sipped moderately a mild dilution of the *crathur,* he prepared to retire to bed. He found upon his pillow a sort of apology for a night-shirt. The laundress's experience of "the master's" habits had taught her that such a thing was required by him; and unfortunately, as this visit happened in the evening of the day when all "the master's" linen had been taken home, she had not one of his own to supply him with; therefore, a coarse something, resembling what is worn outwardly by waggoners in the provinces of England, was substituted. At first he hesitated to employ it; but reflecting that he must otherwise sleep in the one he had on, and that he must necessarily wear that the next day, his destitution urged him to try on the garment supplied from his host's stock, in which, however it might fall *short* of what he had been accustomed to wear, he contentedly laid down, first carefully folding and placing his own linen on the bed, fearing that the moveables in the room might not serve as bleaching-machines, if he laid it upon any of the chairs. In the midst of his sorrows, he at last fell asleep; but towards the morning, which, being in the dark season of the year, he conceived to be "the middle of the night,"—that period, so called by people of late habits, which comes an hour or two before their usual time of rising—he thought he heard the key turn in the lock, as if a stealthy attempt was made to open it. The sleeper was, however, too drowsy to be capable of ascertaining the fact, and he dozed off again, but soon heard another attempt upon the door. He called out, "Who's there?"— the noise ceased. Again he slept — again he was disturbed. At last, after another pause, he was once more startled from his sleep, by something cautiously creeping about his small apartment. The certainty that some person was in the room, and for some secret purpose, was not very agreeable. He remained silent, holding his breath, and waiting the result. At length, a hand touched the top of the bed-clothes, and as soon shrunk away, as if alarmed at its own temerity. The young man shuddered. It was impossible, he thought, that the owners of the apartment would think of visiting him in this way. His only conjecture was, that instead of occupying the shop, as he supposed they had done, they had possibly left the house to obtain some better accommodation for the night, and that some intruder had taken advantage of their absence to rob at least, if not murder, their sleeping guest, naturally supposing that he might possess something worth the attempt. He was soon, however, relieved from the most terrible part of his fears by the evident retreat of the untimely visiter, who, as he drew the door of the room after him, whispered in a hoarse, and as it appeared to the alarmed occupant, a murderous voice, to somebody without, "I've got it!" Got what? asked the trembling comedian of himself, and he stretched out his hand to the chair upon which his coat and nether garments had been laid when he undressed: these were safe. Wondering, therefore, what could have been the object of this secret visit, and keeping watch till day began to look in upon his deplorable state, he sunk into a heavy slumber, from which he did not awake till the day was "well aired." He then perceived his humane gaoler enter, with shaving-pot, powder-bag, and "all appliances and means to boot," for completing a "*jintleman's*" *toilette*, as far as head was concerned in that day, and smiling with a proud and gratified expression, bowed to "the master," and proposed to commence the accustomed operation of the morning, first stifling in their very birth all thanks for the over-night's kindness, and regret at the sacrifice it had occasioned his entertainers. The young man then revealed the terrors of the night to the hair-dresser, who listened to the relation with a somewhat embarrassed, and what seemed to his visiter a suspicious, air. He certainly neither attempted to account for the mysterious disturbance of his guest's slumbers, nor to explain how the key had been obtained, but hurriedly proposed that, as it was a cold morning, and the fire and "his honor's" breakfast were not quite ready, that his "honor's goodness" would allow him to throw his towel round his "honor's neck," and to dress his "honor's head," as he sat up in bed. This was a very odd sort of request, and was at first resolutely denied; but Pat was so anxiously earnest, that at last "his honor" consented to the strange importunity of his host, and suffered the operation of having his hair dressed in the position described. The process was somewhat tedious, and "his honor" became impatient. The barber arranged and re-arranged the curls—fidgeted from one side of the bed to the other, when at last the door opened, and in marched, in a triumphant manner, the laundress, with a basket which, with some parade, she placed upon a chair near the bed, and lo! the dark transaction of the night was elucidated. On explanation it appeared, that some time after the benevolent couple had laid themselves down and taken their "lodging upon the cold ground," it occurred to the good laundress that the "young master" would, according to custom, require a change of linen in the morning, and she repented that this after-thought came too late to enable her to execute her wishes that night. "If she had *mintioned* it to his honor before he went to sleep, she could have washed 'his honor's' linen before the fire went out, and it would have been dry by the morning." Having omitted to do so, she compromised the matter with her conscience, by rising earlier than usual, and sending her husband stealthily into "the master's" room in the morning, in order not to disturb him, to take away "the master's eleven shirts short of the dozen," with other washable hangings, that she might present him, as an agreeable surprise, with a set of things in the state she knew his daily comfort required. As the time was brief, and firing dull, these ablutions required more time than she had calculated upon; hence the expedient of the worthy barber, and his contrivance to keep "his honor" longer in bed than usual.

In this friendly shelter the young actor remained until he wrung, by humiliating solicitations, a pound or two out of the cruel grasp of

Mr. Daly. He then reclaimed his little property from his unfeeling landlord, and it may be imagined that he repaid in every way in his power the kindness as well as the actual claim of his humble friends. It may be also believed, that in more prosperous times the "great London actor" did not forget the service done to him by these worthy people while he was only one of the most insignificant of "Daly's divarters." On his first increase of income, Mr. Mathews sent a small remittance to his poor little barber, with a promise to repeat it periodically. That promise (which often proved inconvenient) had been faithfully performed up to this time; and as soon as he paid this, his second visit to Ireland, after sixteen years' absence, his first thought was of his generous little friend, to whom he resolved to give a pleasing surprise in his way. For this purpose, the first night of his arrival, he ordered that on the following morning a breakfast for three might be prepared, at the same time informing Mr. Incledon, who was in the house with him, that he wished him to be present, to be introduced to a very particular and distinguished guest, enjoining the master of the house "to provide an excellent breakfast, for he expected the company of the best friend he had in Dublin." The landlord, impressed with the notion which such a declaration implied, namely, that some great man was expected, of whose friendship the actor was vain, determined at once to obey his order in the spirit in which he conceived it was given; and forthwith, for the credit of his own establishment on so distinguished an occasion, he ordered his best service of china to be set out, and all the plate that could be made available. A message was then sent to the barber, simply to the effect that he was required to operate upon a gentleman's chin (alas! for the craft, powder had ceased to be worn) at a certain hour; at which period Mr. Mathews took care to secure his other guest in the room, and everything but the "hissing urn," which, albeit emitting sounds unmusical to an actor's ear, was ready for the winding up of the little plot of the present drama. Incledon had somewhat super-adorned his person on this occasion, out of respect to his host's superior guest. At the appointed time the barber was announced to be waiting without for his customer, and the waiter who delivered the message was somewhat surprised to hear himself ordered to admit this person into the breakfast-room immediately. He obeyed; and in a minute after appeared the little man, arrayed in jacket and white apron, and shaving appurtenances in hand, standing respectfully and doubtingly upon the threshold of the door. He was not much altered; for time had but little changed his benevolent features, and Mr. Mathews would have known him had he not been prepared to expect him. It was otherwise with himself; the slim, half-starved youth, with narrow, consumptive chest, and pale face, had expanded into the full-grown, healthy man; and his ruddy cheeks and improved appearance were not easily to be recognized without some clew, as belonging to the once friendless, depressed creature, who had been beholden to his humble friend's kindness. Pat hesitated, and looking doubtfully first at one "jintleman," and then at the other, whose head was a little averted, inquired respectfully "Which of their honors sent for him?" Incledon at once disowned the necessity for his services, but the other "jintleman" ran up to the astonished man, hastily relieved him from the shaving utensils, placed them on the table, and in the next minute made himself known to him.

The scene that followed was most interesting, as I have heard it described by Mr. Incledon. The little barber was half mad with gratified feeling. He was desired to sit down and eat the breakfast (to him a dinner), and then to relate how he was situated, whether his wife lived, &c. This he did, after some scruples at such a freedom; and all was told. The breakfast ended, and "the master's" affairs requiring his presence elsewhere, the little barber (whose name I have forgotten) was dismissed, with an assurance that his friend would call the next day upon his wife, and take a peep at his old dormitory.

It may easily be imagined how surprised the landlord of the hotel was at the great man he had so splendidly provided for; but he was a good-hearted Irishman, and enjoyed the scene, (of which the bringing in of the urn had made him a witness,) and laughed heartily at his own extra preparations. The barber found an increase to his pension in the next instalment; and he and his wife, like the good children in the story-book, "lived happy ever after," until (as the Irishman himself would have added) the day of their death. Mr. Mathews was not in the habit of talking of his own good actions; but when a mixture of drollery tempted him to relate any of them, he could not always resist; and he never repeated the scene I have so poorly described without his hearers, after their first laugh, being almost moved to tears.

A few years after this incident, during one of his frequent engagements in Dublin, Mr. Mathews saw his worthy little friend expire in the very bed (though much improved in its appearance) which he had once given up to him, and upon which he blessed him for the last time. It may be believed that the poor widow, who had a half claim upon her husband's pension, felt no diminution of it, but enjoyed the advantage entire until she died.

CHAPTER VII.

Letter from Mr. Harris.—Mr. Mathews's benefit at Dublin.—His imitation of legal characters.—Offers of engagement from Mr. G. Colman and Mr. Thomas Sheridan.—Mr. Mathews's reception at York.—Project of Mr. Mathews and Mr. Incledon.—Singular detection of a patrician thief at Portsmouth.—Insanity of Bradbury the clown.

The following letter to me from Mr. Harris at this time is a curious instance (out of the many) of the reliance which managers placed in Mr. Mathews's talent, and it will also serve to show their own habit of "bespeaking to order" anything they required him to do for them.

Dear Madam, C. G. T. Thursday, 25th July, 1811.

When you write to Mr. Mathews, pray tell him I wish him much to study a good fat brogue, as I have got a capital part for him as an "Irish Schoolmaster who teaches the English Language." It is written by the late Mr. Tobin.

Yours truly,

To Mrs. Mathews. H. Harris.

I have no recollection whether this piece was acted or not, but the idea was so good that I think, from such a pen it could not have proved a failure if it had been brought out.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

DEAR MADAM, Dublin, Aug. 13th, 1811.

My friend Mathews commissions me to acquaint you with the supposed result of last night's success. He had the most marvellous benefit ever known in Dublin, and the receipts (as yet not wholly calculated) are guessed to amount to upwards of five hundred pounds! Never have I known such a house, or more flattering testimonials of public approbation. I have only time to offer you my congratulations on his unprecedented success, founded equally on his public merits and private worth.

Dear Madam, most faithfully yours, F. MULOCK.

The above is true, and I am well. Going to dine with the Lord-Lieutenant, and will write to-morrow.—C. M.

The cause of the above letter being written by Mr. Mulock, and the brief postscript by Mr. Mathews, was partly owing to illness from harass, and the difficulty my husband felt in writing to me without revealing circumstances which would have distressed me; he therefore waited till he had overcome the effect of his annoyance before he entered upon the subject. Such was always his considerate conduct. His own letter, two days after, will explain particulars.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dublin, Aug. 15th, 1811.

I should have written to you yesterday, but such a day of horror, confusion, illness, vexation, rage, insanity, I believe I may say, as Tuesday I never spent in my life. God be thanked you did not witness the scene, and be praised that I am now in a sufficiently calm state of mind to relate it quietly. To explain to you the confusion, the total want of system in an Irish theatre would be impossible on paper; but when I return, and tell you that it extends to benefits, &c., you will not be surprised at anything you hear. I was told that I must have two friends at every door, or the plunder would be horrible. These friends I obtained, and took every precaution, nay, more than caution; but notwithstanding all, I have been *so used*, and have been so unfortunate in some circumstances, that I could not bear it with philosophy. When Mulock, wrote to you he was in my room surrounded by my friends, check-takers, and the box money-taker, one of the most atrocious, barefaced, cut-throat looking ruffians that ever disgraced humanity. The immense overflow of the night before had made everybody guess my house at a hundred pounds more than ever it was known to hold. I was ill with a sick headache from fatigue; and Mulock, finding it near post-time, wrote to you an account for me, to save time. He had inserted *six* hundred pounds in the letter; I, with "most prophetic soul," altered this to *five*, thinking it a pity to raise your expectations; but certainly hoping to surprise you agreeably next day. Not one hour after the letter went away the scene began. Every creature said the night before, that the receipts would be 600*l.* No difference of opinion, except a few pounds. Some said, 580*l.* or 590*l.* though the house appears full at 450*l.*; and 500*l.* is supposed to be the "cram" of every seat. When every account was closed, the sum-up was 470*l.* Now, you will not wonder that I felt some chagrin and disappointment at hearing this declared. All were aghast. But, after the surprise was over, the truth began to appear. It then came out, that it was another Opera-house business:* hundreds passed the check-takers without delivering them, numbers without paying at all; others, with tickets in their pockets, who could not deliver them. One of my friends at the door was beaten and bruised, his pocket picked, and overpowered; the other, good † ——, twice nearly fainted, his clothes torn and spoiled, and also overpowered. Our old friend J. Williams you would have thought big enough, but he had not strength to keep all quiet. Well, after my first shock was over, I thought myself fortunate in getting so much. But, when the money-return came, it was palpable that much more was taken than either Elliston or Kelly ever had at their "break-in." Now I have had the beastly satisfaction of making you participate a little in my misery, and alarming you a little at first. I now tell you that Mr. O. S. has been obliged to give up 3*l.* 15*s.* for checks come in; that that money has been paid; and that altogether it will be 500*l.*; but observe, Irish money; this is less than English. Now, had I been told three weeks back that I should have had so much, I would not have listened to it. I am therefore well off, and am now quite well and comfortable. To-night I set off to Drogheda.

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* An allusion to two similar occasions, when Mr. Elliston and Mr. Kelly took their respective benefits at the Italian Opera house, in London, and the public forced their way in, without delivering their tickets or money until they were seated.—A. M.

† "Good ——" took care to repair the damage done to his wardrobe on this occasion, by robbing him, a year or two after, of 150*l.* which he received on his account for tickets at his house.—A. M.

We* perform our entertainments to-morrow or Monday; at Belfast soon; and on the 28th we return here, and perform. Ireland will be a little fortune to me. Their kindness to me knows no bounds. I can say to *you* only, that such a favourite never was known here as myself; as many went away from the doors as would fill the Haymarket. All the outer gates were obliged to be shut at eight o'clock, and guards employed to clear the streets. Mulock says, it was not a benefit, but a rebellion. Such a scene never was witnessed. God bless you.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

After Mr. Mathews's departure the following paragraph appeared in a Dublin paper:—

FAME FOR THE LAWYERS.

It is said that Mr. Mathews, the comedian, went several times to the Court of Common Pleas, during the last sittings after term, and that he was highly delighted with "the kind of fun" which occasionally occurs there. Some of the "rollicking fellows" (as they call themselves) who perform in that Court, to the great amusement of Lord Norbury, may rest assured that their transcendant merits will be made fully known to the people of London and Westminster, through the kind exertions of so able a representative.

The writer's anticipations were certainly realized in several subsequent performances wherein legal characters were introduced, but with no invidious effect: witness his sketches of various courts of justice in his "At Homes." In the midst of the numerous allusions which convulsed the audience with laughter, no one was ever heard to cry "That is levelled at me;" and if now and then a nice ear might detect an intonation that reminded him of "a brother," he smiled at it in perfect assurance that if his turn should come next, there would be "no offence in't" whatever.

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* Mr. Incledon had joined him professionally for a limited period.—A. M.

The two following letters show that the London managers were now becoming desirous of the return of Mr. Mathews:—

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

DEAR MATHEWS, 22nd August, 1811.

Many thanks for your letter. It appears to me that the chance of your engaging in the Haymarket being so very remote, it would be premature for *me* to mention terms; at all events (and indeed at any time), I think the proposition of remuneration should come from *you*. The owner of marketable goods should first put a price upon them. My reasons for applying to you were, that I heard you did not mean to perform in the Lyceum at all during the next season; that you had *rural* views of emolument, and that you speculated upon filling up the greater part of the ensuing twelvemonths in the country. Supposing such reports might be true, I thought it might be worth your while to come to me on the 15th September next, and play till the 15th October (when I close), and also to join me for the whole of *next* season, from 15th May to 15th October 1812, occupying the intermediate months with money-getting out of London.

But you tell me you will write to me again. After having opened thus much of my plan, you may perhaps look at it in an extended point of view, and give it further consideration. I most heartily rejoice to hear of your success. Believe me, dear Mathews,

Very truly yours,
G. Colman.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

My dear Sir, August 23rd, 1811.

Mr. Peake* has just transmitted a letter to me which he has received from you (dated 10th August, Dublin). I have determined to reply to it myself, though I heartily wish no answer had been necessary. I regret that anything should have occurred to render your situation at the Lyceum unpleasant, the more so as I had hoped after all the hurly burly past, that we should have gone on cordially when once we got together again. I again offer you an engagement for three or five years in the D. L. company.

I think you are short-sighted in your view of theatrical concerns, as they regard your own interest. I have no doubt you may gain more this season by the scattered sort of engagements to which you allude, than you will at the Lyceum, but the same opportunities may not present themselves another season, and I have no hesitation in affirming that it is only owing to the peculiar state of public affairs at this moment that they exist now. There must and will be two *established* theatres, at one of which the D. L. company will perform; and a permanent situation in that company is better than any other speculation; and I maintain that you do unwisely in forcing us to look out for a substitute, who may, for anything you know, creep into favour with the public, while you, for the sake of a few more pounds, have withdrawn yourself from its notice. With regard to the inconveniences of the Lyceum establishment, they are not to be denied. As you say the only way to compensate for them is to make your situation there in other respects as pleasant as we can; rest assured you will find Mr. Arnold as well disposed as myself to render it so, in every way within our power. I request your answer as soon as possible. I trust it will be favourable, and that I shall not be mortified by the desertion of a front-rank man in the old Drury-lane corps: at all events let it be explicit and decisive.

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* The treasurer of Drury-lane Theatre, and father of Mr. Richard Brinsley Peake, the popular dramatic author.—A. M.

And believe me, dear sir, very truly yours,

Thomas Sheridan.

This letter made the fifth application—no mean evidence of Mr. Mathews's importance to the London managers; but his repugnance to return to this theatre, notwithstanding his great regard for Mr. Thomas Sheridan, *apart from the concern*, was not to be overcome; and in the end he convinced the applicants that his determination was not to be shaken, either by the kind offers of the one or the arguments of the other.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

York, September 11th, 1811.

I am now writing at the house of the darling Belcombe family,* where I have dined.

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* Doctor Belcombe, an eminent physician of York, and one of our earliest and best friends.—A. M.

On Monday I performed at Hull, and here last night. You know York is a bad theatrical town,—and now it is empty, and more than usually poor—all croaking. Don't be vexed, 25*l.*! but such a darling set, such a reception! I don't know when I have been so gratified; it really appears to me as if it were my native county. The sound of the dialect, after my various visits, was music to my ears; and I am now quite fixed in my opinion that the most friendly and truly hospitable people I have met, are the Yorkshire folks. Such shouting at Barney!* This has been a delightful day. I have been caressed by all ranks. It has been no small gratification to me to hear the warmth with which you are spoken of here, and the true friendship and kindness expressed for you. To-morrow, Leeds, and on Friday morning I shall enter the tedious coach which is to convey me to all I hold most dear.

I believe, before I close this, I must prevail on you to add 81*l.* to the 25*l.* mentioned in the first page, and that will make the real receipts last night. Were you had? There I have hoaxed *you!* What a house for deserted York!

From the succeeding letter, addressed to my husband by Mr. Incledon, it will appear that Mr. Mathews's continued want of reliance on his own individual powers to amuse an audience, had led him to unite his own with those of another, and that this gentleman was to be his coadjutor in his forthcoming plan, of a regularly organized tour, with his entertainment of "Mail-coach Adventures."

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* One of the idiots previously described, whom he imitated in the "Mail-coach Adventures."—A. M.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Richmond, Yorkshire, Friday, Sept. 27th, 1811.

My dear Charles,

I this instant received yours, and I perfectly agree with you that no time is to be lost. I shall therefore decline going to Liverpool till you are of the party.

I should wish to commence our Lecture at Rochester; then at Canterbury, two nights; then Margate, Sandwich, along the coast to Brighton, Chichester, Portsmouth, &c.

Ten thousand thanks, my good fellow, for defending me against the malevolence and infamous falsehoods of the proprietors of the theatre. Thank God! my mind is perfectly at rest, as, on examination of my own conduct, I can find nothing that I have a right to charge myself with, of behaving either in an unjust or ungentlemanly manner towards them.

It gratifies my feelings to find that I live in the kind remembrance of my theatrical brethren. I hope and trust I shall never do anything to forfeit their good opinion. Remember me kindly to all those that are in any way interested in the fate of poor Charles Incledon. But for the arrangement we have now made, I should have taken my departure for America: *that was my first determination.* You have now made me alter my plans for the present. It is the opinion of every one to whom I have spoken on the subject, that we shall make a handsome fortune by this our plan; and I think so too. Courage! Charles Mathews and Charles Incledon—a fig for the managers!—we can live without their aid; and, for my part, the ingratitude and ill-treatment I have received at their hands will only serve as a stimulus to make me exert myself to the utmost in this new undertaking. God bless you and all the Mathews's. I have shared with Butler to the tune of sixty pounds per week. That we may continue to rob the natives, and do it with unwashed hands, is the fervent prayer of, dear Charles, thine in the spirit,

C. B. INCLEDON.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Portsmouth, Oct. 23d, 1811.

I should have written yesterday to you, but a great deal of my time, and more of my attention, was taken up by a most melancholy circumstance.

The history was nearly as follows:—A young man of family, the Hon. Mr. ——, staying at an inn in Portsmouth, previously to sailing for India, where he was going out as an aide-de-camp to General ——, with a party of friends, also officers, joined company at supper one evening with Mr. Bradbury, the clown, of Covent Garden Theatre, a person of very gentlemanlike exterior and manners, and ambitious of the society of gentlemen. He was in the habit of using a very magnificent and curious snuff-box, and on this occasion it was much admired by the party, and handed round for inspection from one to the other.

Mr. Bradbury soon after left the inn, and retired to his lodging, when he missed his box, and immediately returned to inquire for it. The gentlemen with whom he had spent the evening had all retired to bed; but he left word with the porter to mention to the officers early the next day that he had left the box, and to request them to restore it to him when found. The next morning Mr. Bradbury again hastened to the inn, anxious to recover his property, and met on his way the Hon. Mr. ——, and communicated his loss to him; when he was informed by that gentleman that a similar circumstance had occurred to himself, his bed-room having been robbed the night before of his gold watch, chain, and seals, &c., and that he was on his way to a Jew in the town to apprise him of the robbery, in order that if such articles should be offered for sale, he might stop them, and detain the person who presented them. This was very extraordinary! Mr. Bradbury then met the other gentlemen of the party, and was told by them that their rooms had also been robbed—one of bank-notes to a great amount; another of a gold watch, &c.; and a third of a silver watch, gold chains, rings, &c. All the rooms slept in by the party were upon the same floor, which circumstance doubtless gave great facility to the thief. These discoveries, as may be imagined, created great consternation in the house, and soon became the topic of the town—all was confusion. Bills were printed and issued—rewards offered for the recovery of the property and detection of the thief or thieves. The Hon. Mr. —— was violently infuriated by his loss; and as he was bound to sail from Portsmouth when the ship was ready, he naturally dreaded being compelled to depart without his property. He hinted, too, that he had certain suspicions of certain people, and even whispered them to some of the persons interested; but as they were of a vague character, they could not, of course, be acted upon. Great excitement continued; and the master of the inn, reasonably alarmed for the credit of his house, upon finding that Mr. Graham, the Bow-street magistrate, was in Portsmouth, waited upon him, and having described the situation in which he was, and the circumstances which had led to his embarrassment, Mr. Graham wrote up to London for one of his most intelligent officers—a man of the name of Rivett.

This man came down promptly, to the great satisfaction of the Hon. Mr. ——, who was most desirous of investigating the mystery, and of detecting the thief, his time becoming short, and his anxiety to recover his property previously to sailing, rendering him more impatient than the rest of the party. Mr. Bradbury and all the officers gave their several accounts of their losses, and Rivett was put in full possession of every particular relating to the business. He then proposed that he should search the house generally, and all the trunks. This was highly approved of, and cordially agreed to by every inmate; and, as the Hon. Mr. —— was evidently the most eager of the party to arrive at the truth, it was proposed that his trunks, &c., might be the first to be examined, to which he assented, and immediately delivered his keys, and accompanied the the officer and gentlemen, with Mr. Bradbury and others, to his room. The ceremony of search having been scrupulously gone through, (of course, without anything being discovered,) the next and the next room was entered by the spectators, and all with similar results. Nothing was to be found, and the affair was inexplicable to all. The losers were in despair, and the unfortunate aide-de-camp was much pitied on account of his approaching voyage, which would necessarily preclude any chance of his regaining his valuables by his own exertions. There was a general pause. At length Rivett addressed the gentlemen, observing that there was yet a duty unperformed, and which was a painful one to him—he must search the *persons* of all present, and as the Hon. Mr. ——'s trunks had been the first to be inspected, perhaps he would allow him to examine him at once. To this he agreed, but the next moment he was observed to look very ill. Rivett was proceeding to search him, as a matter of course, when he requested that everybody would leave the room, except the officer and Mr. Bradbury, which request was immediately complied with. He then fell upon his knees, entreated for mercy, and placed Mr. Bradbury's box in his hand, begging him to forgive him and spare his life! Rivett upon this proceeded to search him, but he resisted; the object was effected by force, and the greater part of the property found that had been stolen in the house. The officer, conceiving that he had not got the whole of the bank-notes, inquired of Mr. —— where the remainder was; when he pointed to a pocket-book which was under the foot of the bed; and while Rivett relaxed his hold of him, and was in the act of stooping to pick up the book, Mr. —— caught up a razor and cut his throat. Rivett and Mr. Bradbury seized an arm each, and forced the razor from him; but he was so determined on self-destruction that he twisted his head about violently in different ways, in order to make the wound larger and more fatal. To prevent him from continuing this, he was braced up with linen round his neck so tightly that he could not move it. A surgeon of the town, with two assistants, came, and after seeing the wound, gave it as their opinion that it was possible for him to recover, and by the assistance of some powerful soldiers holding him, they dressed the wound. His clothes were then cut off, and he was carried down stairs into another room. During this operation he coughed violently, but whether naturally or by design, to make his wound worse, was not ascertained. It had, however, the effect of setting his wound bleeding again, and the dressing was obliged to be repeated. Two men sat up with him all night. On the next morning the depositions of the witnesses were taken before the Mayor, and Mr. —— was committed.

The sequel of this distressing history was of a an equally melancholy character.

Poor Mr. Bradbury was standing close to the unfortunate young man when he committed the sudden attempt upon his own life. The horror of the act, and the shocking appearance of his lacerated throat, the blood from which flowed out upon Mr. Bradbury—in short, this heart-rending result of the previous agitation and discovery, acted upon the sensibility of Mr. Bradbury to such an extent as to deprive him of reason. This fact was noticeable two days after the above scene, by his entering a church, and after the service was ended going into the vestry, and requesting the clergyman to pray for him, as he intended *to cut his throat!* This distemper of mind was not too great at first to admit of partial control; but it daily increased, and ultimately caused him to be placed under restraint.

The skill and attention of the surgeons had placed the unfortunate Mr. —— in a state of recovery, and he waited to take his trial at the next sessions; when, I believe, no evidence appearing against him, he escaped the consequences of his dishonourable act. Here my husband's letter may be resumed.

Poor Bradbury, the clown, I heard was confined here in the gaol, as they have no mad-house. From liking to see everything, and secondly from an idea of being of service to him, as he was entirely surrounded by strangers, I went to see him. I found him strapped down to a miserable bed, in a strait-waistcoat. Strange to say, though I have a very slight acquaintance with him, he recognised me, called me by name, and became instantly calm from a raving fit. He immediately began to complain of the treatment he had received, and declared that he was completely at a loss to account for it. He then related to me all the circumstances of his journey from London to Ireland, in so coherent a manner, that I began to imagine he was perfectly sane; but suddenly his eye changed and he began to wander, saying that from Ireland he had been dragged all through Portugal; and that the Mayor here, who was in the room, had been offended because he had at church, during sacrament, handed Buonaparte some wine and cake before him, and for that he had tied his arms, and employed men to dress themselves in various shapes, and to dance constantly round the room to annoy him, and so on. I now very soon calmed him again, by declaring that I would undertake to get him away that night to London (the Mayor having told me that it was their intention to send him to Hoxton, near London, in a chaise that night, as they have no mad-house here). This immediately took possession of his mind. I left him with the promise of returning for him in the evening. The Mayor begged I would attend, and I was most happy that I happened to be in the way, for without me to a certainty they would not have got him off. I went at five o'clock, and found that he had been raving again; but he became instantly calm when he saw me. I told him to be quiet, and they would put on his clothes. They then took off the waistcoat, and he suffered himself to be dressed, and assisted himself. But when the strait waistcoat was offered to him again, he began to show his spirit. The men were alarmed, as he had one day before beaten six of them, and made his escape completely to the street-door, which fortunately was too strong for him. He now declared that no man living should put it on him again. To show how completely he depended on me, the instant I whispered to him that he ought to submit, he helped himself into it; and winked at me with the greatest delight. By this means we got him quietly into the chaise. I wrote to Elliston to find out his friends, if he has any. I assure you it was a most affecting scene, and I hope will sufficiently excuse my not writing before. We have commenced with our usual success. The theatre overflowed, and hundreds went away. Receipts—118*l.*

CHARLES MATHEWS.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Incledon and the hoax of "The Jubilee Lozenge."—His revenge on Mr. Liston.—Mr. Mathews's letters to Mrs. Mathews from Winchester, Worcester, Derby, Hull, York, Wakefield, and Doncaster.—Letters to George Robins, Esq. relative to a proposed engagement of Mr. Mathews at Covent Garden Theatre.—Letter from Mr. G. Colman on the above subject.—Mr. Mathews's reply.—Separation of interests between Mr. Mathews and Mr. Incledon.

Mr. Liston was at one period of his life a most determined joker. He and my husband were one day together in a shop in Bond-street, kept by a Mr. Amick, which was full of perfumery, beautiful toys, and nickknacks of every kind. They had been looking at some amulets, a black composition, just new, and intended for brooches, upon which the head of George the Third was stamped, to commemorate the jubilee. Mr. Incledon passing at the moment, observed his brother comedians, and entered the shop. He admired in turn all the pretty objects placed in every direction; and, attracted by the amulets, he inquired what they were. Before Mr. Amick could reply to his question, Mr. Liston (who was aware of Incledon's overweening love of any novelty in the shape of medicine or voice-improver,) told him, they were lozenges of a most wonderful property, just discovered. As he anticipated, Mr. Incledon caught at the bait, seized up one, and examining it with much interest, observed that it was "very large" (it was about the size of a small locket). He was told that, as only one was necessary to the cure of the person whose voice was out of order, it was made of the size requisite for the purpose;— "But," observed Mr. Liston artfully, "*you* cannot require such a thing, Incledon! There's nothing the matter with *your* voice!"—"Is n't there, my dear boy! that's all *you* know of the matter! I've been as hoarse as a raven this fortnight; in fact, I've not a note left in my voice;" a constant assertion by him when his voice was at his very best. "Well," said the wag, "if that's the case, the Jubilee Lozenge is the *very thing*." He then adduced several "cases" of its miraculous results within his own knowledge. Upon this Incledon addressed the master of the shop, who was exceedingly embarrassed at the trick thus played upon a customer: "What, sir, is the price of this invaluable lozenge?" — "Ten and sixpence," was the reply.—"It's a large sum for one lozenge, sir; but, as my friend Mr. Liston assures me that it is efficacious, and as at this time I have not the ghost of a note left in my voice, from a severe cold, I'll take *one*." He then threw down the money, and put the amulet into his mouth, observing, that "it was made of a very inconvenient shape; but he supposed there was some good reason for it." Mr. Liston instructed him to keep it all day in his mouth, that being the intent. Away went the singer, quite pleased with the toy for which he had paid so dearly, and the two jokers roared aloud with laughter when he was out of hearing, at the easy credulity of their unsuspicious friend.

At night everybody in the green-room was apprised of the jest, and agreed to assist in prolonging it. Mr. Incledon, who did not play until the afterpiece, entered the room with the lozenge in his mouth. Being prepared for his appearance, Mr. Liston had all his confederates assembled. They inquired, in turn, every particular about the wonderful remedy "of which they had all heard so much?" Incledon was very communicative as to its effects. "His voice was *certainly* clearer since he had had the lozenge in his mouth, but at the same time he could not withhold from them his conviction that the sucking of it had made him feel exceedingly sick;" and well it might, for it was in fact a mass of perfume, like a highly scented pastile, nauseating to the palate, as might be expected.

In the midst of the interest occasioned by this invaluable recipe, Mr. John Kemble, who had been performing in the play, and had listened to the conspiracy against the simplicity of poor Mr. Incledon, now entered, and, to the surprise of all present, joined in the hoax. He told Incledon that he was well acquainted with the amazing efficacy of the article; but added—"It will not be wholly effective, my dear Incledon, unless you keep it in your mouth all night!" Incledon's eyes twinkled with gratification at the interest manifested by the great tragedian in his well-being, and at his confirmation of the treasure he had obtained. "But, my *dear* Mr. Kemble," he replied, "may it not choke me in my sleep?"—"Oh, no!" said the somewhat solemn jester; "oh no! it 's scarcely large enough for that. Besides, Mrs. Incledon will be aware of your struggles, and attend to you if it should get into your throat." Incledon gave him a look which had a dawn of suspicion in it; but the unmoved gravity of the speaker dispersed it when he added —"It will do you no good unless you keep it on your tongue all night, be assured, my dear Incledon; so don't think of removing it." Poor Mr. Incledon obeyed this injunction strictly; and the next morning gave sad evidence of his obedience, appearing in the green-room with his natural ruddiness exchanged for a sickly complexion, from want of rest, and from the increasing disgust of the scented mass in his mouth.

It was now time to heighten the plot, previously to breaking it up. One of the conspirators was intimate with a gentleman relishing a joke,* and happy to assist in one. On hearing the particulars, he was induced to place a paragraph in the next day's paper, in accordance with the intended sequel to the imposture.

The time came for rehearsal. The plotters congregated in a manner that when Mr. Incledon arrived, he must of necessity see them and overhear their observations. Mr. Fawcett was much perturbed, and apparently, as he held the morning's newspaper open in his hand, indignant; all, indeed, seemed shocked. "Was it possible!"—"What a monster!"—"Who could divine such an instance of hatred to the English nation!" — "*Poor* Incledon!" — "Has anybody seen him to-day?"—"What *will* be the consequence?" — "What a loss to the public!"— "Dreadful! Shocking! Afflicting!" &c. At this moment the group affected to perceive Incledon for the first time. They were all affection and sympathy. Mr. Liston *wept* to think he had been the innocent instrument of his friend's ruin. Mr. Mathews besought his forgiveness for his share in his destruction; and at last Incledon's suspense and agitation were so affecting to them all, that the fatal paragraph was submitted to his perusal. It was as follows:—

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* Mr. Quin, connected with "The Morning Chronicle."

Jubilee Lozenge.

The public are cautioned against a specious but most injurious artifice, which has of late been practised by some unprincipled quacks. A trinket, in the form of a shirt-brooch, adorned with the miniature likeness of the King, is said to be impregnated with a certain mineral property that can expel all disorders from the stomach of the wearer, who, to stimulate and call forth the essential virtue of the ornament, is desired to keep it in his mouth and suck it. The truth indeed is, that an adventitious property has been infused into the metal of which the trinket is formed ; but, so far from its being of a salutary nature, its deleterious qualities are invariably experienced in subtle and slow, but infallible operation, by all the unhappy dupes to the imposture. The poison peculiarly attaches itself to the lungs, producing insensibly a decay of the vocal powers, and usually terminating in incurable hoarseness.

It is reported that the French Emperor, jealous of the superior powers of melody which our stage can boast, has lately employed some of his emissaries in persuading one of our most eminent native female singers to make use of this destructive bane to vocal excellence. It is apprehended that the same artifice will be employed to rob our most celebrated male performers of their voice, and in consequence both of their fame and their bread.

The agony of the reader at the close of the paragraph was such as to make all present desirous of explaining the jest. Incledon dropped the fatal amulet from his mouth, and clasping his hands together, exclaimed, " I 'm a murdered man !" and dropped on a seat.

The whole was then confessed; and the well-known good-nature of Mr. Incledon was never more apparent than in his forgiveness of this hoax against his prevailing foible. He vowed revenge, however, when a time should come fitting for a retort; and the following mode was resorted to, successfully, to startle, although it probably did not deceive, Mr. Liston.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Portsmouth, November 3rd, 1811.

I thought you would have been more amused with the bill than to send it back. There—I have hoaxed you! I thought it would puzzle you at first. The fact is, Incledon owes Liston a hoax in return for the "Jubilee Lozenge," and asked me to assist him, and I projected the top of the bill as you saw it. Mottley the printer entered into the joke, and got us exactly six copies struck off, and then destroyed the type. One was sent to Charles Taylor, one to Brandon, one to Robins, one to Dowton, and one to you; the other I have kept. They were all directed by Mottley, and I thought (as it turned out) that you would not suspect the joke. It is plain you had no idea that it came from us, and I imagine that all the other persons were as much at a loss as yourself. Liston seeing four bills, will certainly think they are in general circulation. If you hear of it, don't explain till you have further orders; we only meant it to puzzle.

Charles Mathews.

Sixth Time.

Messrs. Incledon and Mathews have the satisfaction of announcing, that they have engaged Mr. Liston, of the

Theatre Royal Covent Garden, for two nights, who will go through the whole of his wonderful performance of fire-eating, swallowing a live cat, &c.; he will also dance on the slack wire, after the manner of Des Hayes; he will stand on one leg three minutes, and balance a coach wheel, in which attitude he will sing the "Beautiful Maid," dressed in armour, with Lord Grizzle's wig, miraculously saved out of the late conflagration of Covent Garden Theatre.

I will here add the actual bill, in order to show the particulars of this combined attraction.

Theatre, Portsmouth.

Mr. Incledon (of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,) and Mr. Mathews (of the late Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,) respectfully inform the ladies and gentlemen of Portsmouth and its vicinity, that, on Monday next, November 4th, 1811, they will have the honour of repeating "The Travellers, or, Hit or Miss."

Part first.—*Exordium.*—Song: "May the King live for ever," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: Irish hospitality. Song: "Kate Kearney," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: General improvement in the conveyance of live lumber, as exemplified in the progress of heavy coach, light coach, and mail; whimsical description of an expedition to Brentford. Song: "The Mail Coach," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: Description of the Passengers; lisping lady; Frenchman, and critic in black. Song: "The origin of Old Bachelors," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: The mendicant seaman. Song: "Poor Will Watch the Smuggler," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: Theatrical criticism; Mr. Macklin; imitation of Mr. Cooke as Sir Pertinax M'Sycophant.

Part second.—Recitation: Breaking of a spring. Song:

"The Thorn," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: Definition of Belles Lettres; Yorkshire Beauty. Song: "What a Beauty I did grow," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: Theatrical criticism; imitation of Mr. Kemble as Penruddock, and Mr. Suett as Weazle; dimensions of Covent Garden stage; imitation of an election orator: Poor Sailor Boy. Song: "Stand to your Guns, my Hearts of Oak," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: Scramble at supper; drunken farmer; cross readings. Song: "Manager Strut was four feet high," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: Another scramble; description of a country fair; Mr. Punch; Yorkshire giant; wild beasts. Song: "Bartholomew Fair," Mr. Mathews.

Part third.—Recitation: Sailor's address to Mr. Incledon. Song: "Lovely Nan," Mr. Incledon. Recitation: Imitation of Mr. Bannister as Bowkit; Justice Deaf; imitation of Fond Barney, of York; highway robberies; Captain M'Jumble from Tipperary. Song: "Orator Puff," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: A bull; quack doctor; mountebank's harangue. Irish song: "Ignatius M'Carty," Mr. Mathews. Recitation: Bull the second. A crash; bang up! bang down! Four-in-Hand Club. Song: "Sally in our Alley," Mr. Incledon. Song: "Prime, Bang up!" (the celebrated song from the popular farce of "Hit or Miss,) dressed in character, Mr. Mathews.

The whole to conclude with G. A. Stevens's description of a storm, in the character of a shipwrecked seaman, by Mr. Incledon.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Winchester, November 6th, 1811.

You will be rather surprised, but I hope not much afflicted, to hear that you will see me on Sunday evening next, or Monday morning! It is true — the iron hand of the law has decreed it, and go I must. On Monday evening last, I was told by the waiter at Portsmouth that two persons wanted to speak to me below. I went down, when these two, who looked mysteriously, handed me a long piece of parchment with a seal, which made me shake. I concluded I was arrested, but could not imagine by whom. At whose suit, I said? The suit of Mr. Morris!

I now soon discovered that it was a subpœna to attend the Court of Chancery, in the suit of Morris *v.* Colman, summoning me to be there on Monday next, and enclosing me a ten-pound note for expenses. I immediately wrote to Morris, stating to him how inconvenient it would be to me. I would not mention it to you till I got his answer. I received it this morning. I find the subpœna is imperative, and if I had been in Ireland, I must have obeyed it.

Charles Mathews.

Mr. Mathews's stay at the cottage was confined to the period required by the subpœna, and again he returned to his engagements.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Worcester, Dec. 2nd, 1811.

Your letter, which I received yesterday just as I was getting into the carriage to come here, breathing kindness and cheerfulness throughout, has quite restored me to my spirits: many, many thanks. I am sure my greatest enemies would pity me, if they really knew what I suffer at times when under the dominion of the dismals. A few kind sentences from you always make their way to my heart. Let me but possess your affection—let me but find you ready to make allowance for the diseases of my mind, and I am indifferent to the opinions of the world. For God's sake,—for my sake, and for your dear boy, do not neglect your health. I cannot in writing express what I should feel were I to lose you.

We had *50l.* at Cheltenham, which is nearly empty. Incledon again prevailed, contrary to my opinion, but for the last time. He will never even be consulted where we go for the future. We expect an overflow to-night here. On Saturday, after performance, I supped with Lord Ormond, and about twelve of the highest-bred Irishmen. Every soul knew Curran, and my imitation of him set them all into fits of approbation. By the by, Dr. Jenner, from old acquaintance, wishes you to come and play for a charity at Cheltenham. They will be all amateurs. We were also asked; but as we cannot afford just now to play for nothing, we have declined it; I thought, however, I would mention it to you. It is next Saturday.

Do the people still believe that Drury will be built? I do not! I hope Mrs. Denman is very attentive to my monkey, and that the parrot improves from her little prattle. Young can always put you in at Covent Garden, orders or not; but don't deny yourself the pleasure of seeing that divinity, Mrs. Siddons, for the sake of money.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

TO GEORGE ROBINS, ESQ.

DEAR ROBINS, Birmingham, Dec. 5th, 1811.

To prove to you that I have not "lost the use of my right arm," I take up my pen to address you; and were I near you I would give you a more *striking* proof of its still retaining its vigour. This I should think a just punishment to a man of business who cannot make an allowance for the apparent neglect of another man of business, for such I really now am. I am sure you often find the difficulty of getting through the letters you are *obliged* to write, and find the impossibility of attending to the mere calls of friendship. If I did promise to write to you soon after my departure, it was because I did not anticipate the difficulties of my situation.

I have frequently, since leaving town, been obliged to write six or seven letters in a day. Incledon does not write a line. You may suppose that when we are advertised to perform in the towns we visit a fortnight before our arrival, that instant communications are necessary with managers, printers, &c., and replication, and double replication, will occur. Granted, you say: if not, curse your hard heart! Well, then, added to this, we travel *four* or *five* miles in a week, and *talk* and *sing* a little; besides which, I am a huge sleeper, and a tolerable trencher-man. So, sum up the hours necessary for these various performances, and deduct (according to Cocker) what remains for recreation,—idleness, I think, will not be allowed for. Now, if you are the liberal man I take you to be, you will, instead of being angry, and writing *at* me, through my wife and chum, write *to* me through the medium of the Postmaster, acknowledging your obligations for receiving so long a letter, (for this sheet, from revenge, shall be full,) and expressing your wonder how any mortal, that is not a thorough-bred auctioneer, can get through such *lots* of business.

Your kind offer of using your newspaper interest is not forgotten, any more than many other acts of kindness of which you have been found guilty to me. But the fact is the reverse of that which you have anticipated. Instead of "not doing so well," we here commenced and continued with one scene of success. It is this, probably, that has made me careless of that for which many people *pray*.

I solemnly declare that I never expended one shilling for a paragraph in the whole course of my theatrical life. I would rather have one picture than twenty puffs, either in print or paste. I am, however, not insensible to praise, nor blind to the service you volunteered. Indeed, I have always meant to avail myself of your good-nature; but probably our success has made me vain, and I have fancied that no aid was required. So much to account for my silence.

I was made very vain in Bath. Indeed, I never have yet acted in London as I know I can, and as I do elsewhere when encouraged by such notice as I received there. In London I am a common raven — in the country they are willing to receive me as a swan amongst the ravens. I have an invitation by Dimond to return, and I know I can have my own terms. As to Covent Garden, my dear Robins, I know you are enthusiastic in your desires to serve a friend; but what could I do there? Munden's is the only vacancy left; and old men I shall endeavour to cut entirely. My policy is to do so, my original hits having been quite in the other way. Fawcett, Liston, and Emery, are strong fellows. I should not like to be shelfed. Were there a line open, I should hail it. I like the Firm: "Dornton and Co. may defy the world." They may promise a salary, and I am sure they would pay it; but can they promise business? I have often wished I was snugly *established* in that house: "once in a baronet's house." However, at present I am bound to Colman, though not absolutely articled; and if he gets his eight months' license, I must be with him, where I shall get a salary the C. G. M.

will not give me; and business they *cannot* give me, in the present state of their excellent comic company. I do not think it policy in a man to go into a theatre, without a direct opening presented itself. In Drury-lane, Bannister smothered me for five years. Another smothering would entirely destroy me.

Now, my good fellow, you will give me credit for a desire to comply with your wishes. I have written a tolerably long letter. If you do not think so, why a plague of your bringing up. Let me hear from you in reply; and give me your ideas of Covent Garden. I like to hear opinions, and to take advice. I am not quite certain of our destination till Friday next; therefore, send your letter, when you write, to my wife. I am, with regards to Mrs. Robins, yours very sincerely,

Charles Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Derby, Dec. 11th, 1811.

We are inundated with petitions and beggars; we never escape in any one town. What do you think of ——, the clergyman, and wife, coming to me at Bristol, and begging for two shillings: they were starving. V——, whom you may remember, with a wife and four children in the same place, without one farthing! He married that wife for 7,000*l.* Love-matches are not always prosperous; but money-matches, I believe, never. Nobody can accuse you and me of that.

Charles Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Hull, December 18, 1811.

I believe I promised to write again on Monday or yesterday; but I have been such a slave in the theatre here that I have not one moment to myself. We play five nights this week, beginning with Monday. French is ill, and cannot come out, and such a set of pumps as the rest of the band it is impossible to conceive. There is not one of them that can play in tune, and the company is not much better. In fact, it is very plain to me that theatricals are completely on the decline. There is no talent anywhere; and I am now convinced that Colman got the very best to be found last summer. No people in their senses would go to see such companies, business so conducted, and characters so dressed—for there is not a wardrobe now anywhere. The consequence is, that even in this fine town, with the most beautiful theatre in England, the business is wretched, and the company all dread Hull as much as we used to like it. They have got out of the habit of coming, and are so altered that it is hard labour, indeed, to make them laugh. Incledon laughs at me now. He cried up Bath; and I gave him flourishing accounts of Hull. He has scarcely got ten hands at the end of his songs, and he is mad. I opened in *Buskin*, and was received most enthusiastically. I sung the "Mail-coach," which went off well; but at the end scarcely any applause, till I walked up the stage. Then they bethought them of a kind of cold *encore.* At the end of the second act they were uproarious; and I was congratulated, though I was mortified, for everybody is talking of their proverbial coldness. Last night, I sung *Caleb Quotem's* song and rhymes without one little boy even calling *encore.* In the "Bee-hive" I went at it with a determination to rouse them, and I mumbled like a mountebank. Half-price was rather livelier, and I nailed them. Nothing could be better. "Mail-coach," first scene, great; second act, they sank again, and not three hands to my song, to which I had drilled the band for *encore* for half an hour. You really would not believe it. My benefit next Monday, I have no doubt, will be great; but John* is sadly disappointed, who expected double each night. The fact is, that people here and everywhere are desponding: trade is ruined, and poverty universal; and it seems to increase every hour. Between ourselves, our scheme has not produced anything like what I expected, or what it did before. The expenses are so enormous that it is impossible to endure them.

Charles Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Hull, Dec. 24th, 1811.

I should have written yesterday, but as it was my benefit I thought I would wait to let you know the result. I have the pleasure to tell you that the receipts were 210*l*. A very pretty sight; the most beautiful theatre in England, crammed full. Every theatrical person in the town there, you may suppose, recollecting what the town used to afford. Incledon's was 116*l*.

Incledon again, you see, is paid by me. However, it has been a good week: we have cleared 100*l*. each, and that is pretty. I have by this trip ascertained what engagements to make, and what I can do; and I have got a very tolerable little fortune waiting for me at a future time, for acting will pay *me* best. I assure you I am in high feather. On Sunday last, for the first time for eight years, I *enjoyed* a frosty day; walked with Parker, and danced at the sight of the ice. I am sure to hear this will give you pleasure. I hope you are better: pray tell me truth. Is dear Charley recovered? I have sent him a birth-day gift, and you may add to it what you think proper for a library. I am quite delighted to hear of his anxiety for learning; nothing could afford me higher gratification. I am all in a bustle, and have only time to say, God bless you. I have a bundle of regards for you from all the old folks here. Parker, at my elbow, desires his also. Write on Friday a long letter, directed to York, where I shall be on Sunday. I will be more particular in my next. You will receive this just at dinner on my darling boy's birthday. I shall think of him, and drink his health. Recollect to write.

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* Mr. John Wilkinson.

Ever affectionately yours,

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Hull, Dec. 1811.

I received your long letter to-day; many thanks. You give me much gratification by your explanation of the word that miffed me. I am rejoiced to hear you are better. I had the delight of paying upwards of three shillings for a letter from ——, with the post-mark of "Birmingham, Derby, Worcester, Litchfield, Sheffield, Retford," &c. on it, to ask me to lend him 150*l.* Do the people think I coin? Money is not so easily got just now, as most of them will find for the future, when they star it! Theatricals slack. More in my next. I shall have a good house. For God's sake write to Johnson. I have got a 1000 lines from them both, to ask, Are you ill? or affronted? or has the cheese disagreed with you? From York too, complaints and letters; and all about *cheese!*

Pray write, for I pay for your neglect. God bless dear Charles; pray take care of him for me.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

York, December 29th, 1811.

If my last afforded you pleasure, you were not behindhand with me in bestowing it, for yours in return gave me great delight. I had a night of apprehension on your and dear Charles's account, for which I can't at all give a reason; but I never was more anxious for a letter.

I have had a stronger proof of the blessing of health over every other earthly advantage, within these three weeks, than ever I had in my life. I wish more than ever to be with you just now; for since my health has improved, the cheerfulness I once possessed has returned to me, and it is really difficult *now to irritate me.*

Your letter has much delighted me. God send you may continue to improve. I am delighted to find that the idea of wine assisting your strength has taken possession of your mind, for there is much in that. I have always told you, you drink too little.

We had 80*l.* again in York on Friday, notwithstanding it snowed all day, which I expected would have ruined us. I felt like a child returned to his parents and relations. Oh, how they did applaud! I could but remember they *made me*, and we were mutually pleased with each other. On Thursday, I drank my dear boy's health at the inn on the road; and at night it was drunk at the tavern at York, by Incledon, Shield, Erskine, &c., in bumpers; and last night I was determined to hear it again, so we drank it in bumpers of tossed wine, with egg. What d'ye think of that, Charley?

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Wakefield, January 3rd, 1812.

Happy new year to you, my dearest girl and dearest boy, and many returns of them. I received your kind, long letter this morning, and though the post does not go out to-night, I could not resist answering you to-day. You are very good in giving me particulars about all the animals, which, next to your own and dear Charles's welfare, is more interesting to me than most intelligence would be of theatres, or half friends. I thank you for your advice of writing with your letters before me: you are right, and I confess my fault; but you will please to recollect in extenuation, that I write every day three or four letters, and sometimes six, and that I therefore always write in a hurry.

Yorkshire for ever! I have got my run now, and can triumph a little over Incledon. I call this my county, and they receive me with such kindness, that it is really delightful. I feel exactly here what some people feel for their native place, and which I never felt for mine.

Robins's letter to me contains at last a direct offer from Covent Garden, which, notwithstanding all your arguments, many of which were decidedly founded in good sense, I think is not to be slighted. As to the dislike you have always felt towards Covent Garden,* that I do not reckon on, as you have not backed that by argument. I, on the contrary, always had a predilection for it. Look at me five years in Drury-lane: what did I do? Look at Liston, in a few months at Covent Garden, though not a part seemed open for him. Again, though I will not accept this engagement without your advice, and do not mean to be in a hurry, yet in one thing I am resolved, that if Bannister is to be at Drury, (and he has been sent for by Whitbread,) no power on earth shall force me there with him. In that I am resolved—remember that! *

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* In reference to his being engaged there.—A. M.

Now, to my offer, which I think stupendous and magnificent! 17*l.* per week,† early benefit—you and your friend free, and the power of putting in two friends every night when you are not there; all the best of Munden's business, and a stipulation with respect to what I am to do. A list to be sent by me, and those marked by them in return considered as a claim on my part. Young Harris, disclaiming the idea of my objection, which I started before I received yours, of being only engaged to be kept from the other house. He says he has no idea of any one interfering with me, as he considers there are many parts which *I* only can act in the burletta way. Emery, it is expected, will not be there. In short, Fawcett is the only person at all in my way, and he is fat, and ten years older than myself; and I would rather be third to him than second to Bannister. The engagement is for five years. They cannot afford to shelf me, I think. Now, my dear Nancy, consider this well, as I mean to do, and let me know the result, but candidly, not fearing, in compliment to me, for I confess I lean towards it. I like the Christmas pantomime, and a few holidays—it gives a zest; but give me all your objections, for those I wish to hear.

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* This determination only alludes *professionally* to Mr. Bannister, who was somewhat tenacious of too wide a list of characters.—A. M.

† This modest estimation of himself will be viewed with some praise by those who know what salaries have been given to men of less value to managers and to the public.—A M.

I was much entertained with your account of that drunken convivial little dog, my *son* and heir. I like his jollity much. Is not 500*l.* the exact sum I have sent you? What an extravagant woman you must be! but, if Charles drinks so desperately, I don't wonder at the money going.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Doncaster, January 13th, 1812.

I have been so hurried these last three or four days, that I have not had time to write; and I now, with fatigue of travelling, feel almost drunk. I have come this morning from York, started at five o'clock, and am writing this at Mason's, where I am waiting till the Sheffield coach takes me up. I perform there to-night, and seize the opportunity of writing, as otherwise you would not hear from me till Thursday, and I thought you would be alarmed. Mrs. Jarman had 190*l.*; which is 150*l.* more than she would have had without me. At Hull I received the parcel with Charles's darling letter, which was read by several old friends with great amusement. Tell him I am quite delighted with his improvement, and will answer him in a few days.

C. Mathews.

The following letter, relative to a pending engagement at Covent Garden Theatre, proves his just understanding of his own powers as an actor, as well as the general fairness of his appreciation of the merits and claims of others.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear Robins, Wakefield, Jan. 15th, 1812.

If you will take the trouble to refer to the beginning of my last letter as an excuse for my not writing oftener to you, you will, I think, find sufficient reason for the apparent neglect. All the causes for silence there given will apply on the present occasion, with some others in addition. On my return from Hull—(where I have done a good action, namely, played for a performer's benefit, and brought 190*l.* who expected only 40*l.*)—I found a letter from you to Incledon, complaining of my neglect. Now, I write several letters every day; and if I did not, we must stop. In addition to that, I travelled all day on Friday, acted three parts at night, and since then have travelled a hundred miles. During that time, you will allow, I had not much time to write a letter so very important to my interests as the one you have expected. Further, your letter, dated December 27th, did not reach me till the 5th January, and, independently of the necessity of some time for deliberation on a very *very* serious point to me, I had to wait the return of a letter from a person upon whose good understanding, from happy experience, I have every reason to rely, and whose sincerity can little be doubted: I mean my wife! You will not, I am sure, blame me for paying her the compliment to consult her on a point so very material to my future welfare; and the more so, when I tell you, that in the letter conveying yours she expressed her alarm at the idea of my going to Covent Garden, urging some of the reasons I gave to you, and some still stronger than my own, against the step. So much for introduction and defence.

Now, my dear friend, let me in the first place, thank you for the great pains you have taken to bring the matter to bear, and impress on you my gratitude for your kindness. I must confess to you, that I have been very uneasy, to say the least of it, since I received your last; in short, I have felt like a man who deliberates on marriage with a woman who has a handsome portion but an ugly face, but whose honour, constantly at the elbow of his conscience, presents fears to him, whether he can be truly happy with one whose purse presents more charms than her person. I am dazzled at the handsome offer made me, for I do consider it very handsome; and a most flattering compliment to what abilities I may possess. Had it been left to me, I should certainly never have dreamt of asking more than a man so deservedly established as Mr. Fawcett. To every iota connected as to privileges, I should cheerfully subscribe without hesitation,—had I not still most horrible fears that I run a risk of a retrograde motion down that hill which I climbed with so much difficulty,—of being kicked down the stairs which I ascended obstructed by a *Bannister* in my way, and of being removed from the loftiest apartment in a house, to the very chimney-top of which my ambition directed my eye, into an apartment less airy, less convenient, and less congenial to one who loves to soar. I will flatter myself that I have one valuable species of knowledge:—I think I know *myself*. I know my fears; I know, on some occasions, my total want of nerve; and I know, that want of manly, proper, justifiable confidence kept me nearly five years in that splendid desert (now defaced), in a subordinate situation; and I know that that want of confidence was created by the absence of opportunities of appearing before that public whom, from the first, where I had fairer play, I had every reason to believe were ready to support me.

In all these statements you, I am sure, will (recollecting my progress with the town) coincide with me. I know, moreover, that actors are tender plants, and do not always bear transplanting. I have seen many instances of a favourite at one house being scarcely noticed by the public at another. Among many others, I think Mrs. C. Kemble a striking instance of this. You will not, I am sure, blame me (nor will Mr. Harris) for taking every possible means to guard against a loss of reputation. The greatest dread I have is of degradation. No earthly power, no pecuniary consideration, no reward, shall ever again induce me to submit to your *Briefwits*, your *Plods*, *Labels*, *Pifflebergs*, *Apathies*, and a long string of walking old gentlemen, which, if Mr. Bannister had alone acted, he never would have had it in his power to monopolize the vast variety of business of which he deprived others. You will, I am sure, see what I mean. I wish to have an assurance of support. I cannot expect to move Mr. Fawcett from his firm and well-established seat; and, if I had the power, I hope I should not have the inclination. I cannot rob Liston of one wrinkle or dimple of his droll face; nor do I ever wish to interfere with any man in his business; but I cannot again brook an inferior situation. You will say, Mr. Harris has already offered handsomely as to promise of business. Granted. His offer hitherto is perfectly liberal; but I am not sufficiently acquainted with the management of the theatre to know all the internal regulations; and it is a delicate matter to say, to whom am I to look for a performance of a promise? Mr. Kemble is a proprietor. Whether he solely directs the stage management, or whether he does not at all interfere, I have no right to know; but he may not be disposed to think so favourably of my abilities as (we will suppose) Mr. Harris may do. Mr. Harris may say, "you shall not be degraded;" but Mr. Kemble may allot me the *Mayor* in "Peeping Tom," or *Sir Felix Friendly*, in the "Agreeable Surprise." Now, rather than play such parts, I would continue to "skir the country round" for life.

I feel at this moment that I would give the world to be on the spot to talk the matter over, as I have already extended the subject to, I fear, a tax on your patience. You will, I hope, do me the justice to say, that I utterly despise a green-room brawler; that I have ever been on good terms with my managers; and that I have too much pride to prate of my grievances, and abuse my employers for supposed ill-usage. I am sure no manager ever kept an actor from the public eye if he thought he had merit to warrant his placing him there; but I know what an interest a manager has to strengthen his pieces by the best performers; and knowing that I cannot stand *before* those already established in Covent Garden—also fearing the possibility of standing in the front rank *with* them, I want to guard against being placed in the rear. Is not this reasonable? Had I such an assurance from all parties interested as would not be thought unreasonable, I will confess to you that I should be much inclined to accept the handsome terms offered me.

As to the list you wished me to send, I have no opportunity of complying with the desire. The only list I have by me would include *Caleb Quotem*, *Lingo*, *Peeping Tom*, and fifty other parts, which I know are in possession, and it would be childish to put down. Then there is *Maw-worm*, *Sir Fretful*, *Buskin*, *Lord Ogleby*, *Cypher*, and a long list that they never perform in that house; and I cannot, in the constant hurry in which I am at present, recollect all that I should wish to do. The greater part of Munden's "old men," I know, are the worst things I do. If I felt assured of the disposition to forward me in new parts I should feel rather careless about the old. I should think myself well off to have two such original parts as *Mingle* and *Cypher* * during my first season, and to play nothing else. But, to be sure, there are 20,000*l.* prizes in the actor's lottery. I wish Mr. Harris could see me when I "star" it in *Vapid* and *Goldfinch*, which, as old parts, I would not dare to do in London. But an original hit or two of that sort from a Reynolds or a Morton I feel most confident I could stand in. Is there any chance of Munden's return? or of Emery going? I have had another two months' study of the Yorkshire dialect, and could undertake some of that line without dread. Some of the papers mention the latter event as certain.

In short, my good friend, I have been thus prolix from a desire to have a decided understanding, from the dread of the possibility of a dispute with my employers, of heartburnings, and of what I have before endured, and I trust with becoming quietness, but with many a pang to myself. I am sure you will understand my sentiments, and I trust will not blame my anxiety. Shall it be left till April for a personal interview, or can it be settled now? Shall we say, on our part, the situation shall be open to you then, if you wish to accept it; and on the other, I give my honour not to listen to any other offer till the negotiation shall be ratified, or broken off? I will take your advice, feeling confident of your judgment and friendship. Pray write as soon as your avocations will allow you.

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* *Mingle*, in the "Bee-Hive,"—*Cypher*, in "Hit or Miss."

With best regards to Mrs. Robins,

I remain ever most truly yours,

C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear Robins, Sheffield, Jan. 20th, 1812.

I am rather surprised you do not recollect that in the earliest part of the negotiation I said, — remember, before we go any further, I am bound to Colman till the 5th of October, and longer if he gets his licence! But my actual engagement is clearly and specifically till that time. Therefore, I gave you notice that I considered that as an impediment; but, if Mr. Harris engaged me, he took me like a race-horse, with my *engagements.* Now, you say, "*The additional month he cannot give you up.*" Why, my good friend, I am not my own property. My own letters would cast me in a court of law, and d— me in every court of honour. I am sure neither you nor Mr. Harris would persuade me to do a dishonourable action. Had I dreamed of an offer from Covent Garden, I certainly would not have gone to the Haymarket at all; but, as I had an oath in Heaven *never* to act at the Lyceum again, and never did believe (nor will I, till I hear the prompter's bell) that Drury would be played in next winter, I accepted Colman's offer; but of this, I again contend, I apprised you. It is only for one season, and I should think one month out of five years may be given up. Your letter, in every other respect, satisfies me, *and I am ready* (giving me the month, which after all perhaps may not be used, as it failed last year,) *to conclude my engagement* *for five years.* What you say about Fawcett is, indeed, a most material point. Did I understand you right? *Is he willing* to take to that line? Or did you say Mr. Harris wishes it, and thinks I surpass him in the younger comedy?[*]

Now, with respect to the secrecy, I think you pay a very bad compliment to my understanding. I certainly agree with you as to the policy of it; and if you believe I have babbled, you have an opinion of me that I hope to remove by a still longer acquaintance. I certainly, by inquiry about Bannister (from Johnstone), which was material to me to know, led him to understand under the seal of secrecy, that I had an idea of the other house. As to Mrs. Mathews, I will stake my existence she never said, "It was all settled" — and by my *Theatrical Portraits*, she never said 18*l.* It is not like her. She is not so little-minded. I never exaggerated my salary in all my life, and she would have been the first to condemn me if I had. I can only say, the subject shall not escape my lips again, if you wish me to be silent; and I have written to my wife to beg that she will also be silent. But such secrets are impossible to be concealed. There are three women at the corner of Bow-street, who keep a glove and gossip shop, that would, on a whisper of a new engagement, seize their bonnets and cloaks, and leave their house unprotected, to fly to their acquaintance with the *news!*[†] Incledon leaves "the world for me to bustle in" to-morrow. Ever gratefully yours,

C. Mathews.

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[*] Mr. Robins had assured him that Mr. Fawcett would enter into the line of *old men*, a line in which he proved himself so admirable when adopted. I need only mention the character of *Captain Copp.*—A. M.

[†] This allusion is to a sort of *house of call* for a certain

Notwithstanding all Mr. Harris's wish for mystery, this engagement soon became known. Mr. Richard Wilson spoke to me in great anxiety as to the possibility remaining for my husband's re-engagement at Drury-lane; and I was obliged to suffer him to forward Mr. Mathews a proposal from the Drury-lane proprietors. In the mean time my husband wrote to me as follows.

I have seen Bannister here and off his guard. That he is to be there, (Drury,) there 's no doubt; and, from what I could gather, to be manager. I could see and watch him calculating upon Mrs. C. Kemble coming back to play with him in "The Prize," "Of Age To-morrow," and all the old round of my former mortifications. No, thank God! I am out of that scrape. Your letter appeared almost a persuasion to me to prefer Drury still. I care not for the people being "up in arms;" they want to see me in *Briefwit*, *Label*, &c., I have no doubt. Which of them ever felt for me in my *situation* in Drury before?

Very tired, and ever yours,
CHARLES MATHEWS.

The negotiation with Mr. Harris closed by Mr. Mathews accepting his terms, with the proviso about Mr. Colman's claim with regard to the month. Mr. Robins's friendly interference in this important step was thus acknowledged:

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number of theatrical idlers, who made purchases at the shop of these worthy people, and canvassed the theatrical questions of the time with them.—A. M.

Dear Robins, York, 25th January.

I can only once more return you my sincere acknowledgments for your kindness; and I am happy that I am not only able to repay you for your trouble, by having accepted your advice in the business, but in adding that it affords me the greatest possible pleasure, as I have many, many times, during my theatrical life, looked with a wistful eye towards Covent Garden. I need only say I am delighted at the arrangement.

Yours, sincerely,
Charles Mathews.

In a few days subsequently Mr. Mathews received a letter from Mr. Colman, (which the letter dated the 20th, to Mr. Robins, will have answered by anticipation,) but as Mr. Colman had no such evidence of the performer's intentions, he was naturally agitated by doubts. This letter is a fine commentary upon Mr. Mathews's recent notice of the value of *reports.*

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

4, Melina-place, Westminster Road,
My Dear Mathews, 28th, January, 1812.

Reports are so strong in respect to your being now engaged at Covent Garden, and having no intention of performing with me, that, although I can scarcely conceive such a fact to be possible, I write for your positive contradiction of the above rumours, which have very lately reached me from various quarters. You cannot have forgotten that at our last parting I told you that I considered our engagement as *concluded;* and that, although I must, *pro forma*, put the proposition to Mr. Morris, yet, as I and Mr. Winston had maturely deliberated upon your terms, and had made up our minds upon the expediency of acceding to them, for the good of the theatre, we should, as the majority of the firm, ratify them, should Mr. Morris's answer turn out contrary to our expectations upon the point. When I talk of this application to Morris, "*pro forma,*" I do not mean to say that it was my intention not to consult him, positively and substantially. I have so consulted him; but yours being a matter which pressed, I had (with Winston) well weighed your proposals, and had decided as to the policy of the engagement, and as to the line to be pursued in case of Morris's objection or negative; and I apprised you of this, that there might be no chance of losing your assistance, through mistakes, through indecision, or through anything which might not appear *virtually*, if not formally, conclusive. I parted with you with the fullest conviction that our bargain was "*done and done*" on both sides: and with this conviction I thought you to be as fully impressed when you quitted London. But, supposing for a moment that you were not so fully impressed, and that you thought some further confirmation, in point of form, still necessary; even under such circumstances, I cannot think that you would treat me with less consideration and delicacy than you showed to Tom Sheridan, towards the end of last summer, with whom you had so very far from *concluded* an engagement, that it has not been settled to this moment; or, rather, has long been entirely *off*. Still, having made some advances in such a bargain, you told me you could not think of engaging with me till you had pursued certain measures, so as positively to ascertain whether he left you at liberty. If you felt this as a *point of honour*, incumbent on you towards *him*, the greater length you have gone in your arrangements with *me* (I repeat that I always thought it conclusive,) must surely act much more forcibly on your mind. In short, I think it next to impossible that you can have thus flown off from me. But do not leave a shadow of doubt upon me; and let me hear from you instantly.

It would be a waste of words to point out to you the extreme confusion and disappointment you would create in my theatrical plans. The moment you have refuted (which surely you must) the reports in question, I will transmit to you all the formalities of ratification, which, after all, were to be but a mere memorandum, and might as well have kept cool till our meeting. I sent to Mrs. Mathews some time ago for your direction; but she happened to be out. A few days ago, also, I sent again by letter, and had the favour of a line from her only yesterday, stating that she had been from home.

You certainly would have heard much sooner, if I had not felt positive on the essential points as to the engagement being decided between us. I rely on your *equity and honour.*

Yours, my dear Mathews, very truly,
G. Colman.

Mr. Mathews's reply to this was of course satisfactory, and drew forth from Mr. Colman the following very long justification of his alarm:

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

4, Melina-place, West. Road,
10th February 1812,

MY DEAR MATHEWS,

I think you owe an apology to yourself, for it is evident you think Charles Mathews is to be suspected, much more than I ever did, or I trust possibly can doubt him. You have reversed, too, some of your original feelings in respect to my unfortunate italics. The concluding part of my letter (in which poor Equity and Honour are scored) you first tell me is a sort of salve for bruises, which, God knows, I had no intention to give; but afterwards you inform me that it is a downright bruise in itself. Why omit all notice of those sundry expressions, which surely may prove in what spirit I made my application for your positive *contradiction* of *rumours?* rumours which I could scarcely think possible. If you take the trouble of recurring to my letter, you will perceive that this sentiment is uppermost throughout: and if, after all the multiplied and strong reports which had reached me, some through a man (though not personally and directly communicated to me by him) who had recently left you; if, after this, I indicated any degree of doubt by naturally going to the fountain-head for a refutation, I have only acted towards you as I should towards any other person, under the same circumstances.

My suspicions, therefore, (since you will call them so,) were such as I should feel towards all mankind, and were by no means individually levelled. The thought also that we might have misunderstood each other as to our engagement, had some operation upon my mind; and in that point of view, let me propose to alter your reading of "premature castigation," into "explanatory statement," given as fully as I could at a very critical juncture to save time, which the delays of repeated discussions containing answers and rejoinders by the post might have occasioned. I cannot in conscience towards myself satisfy you by saying that I have behaved very ill to you, but from the very bottom of my heart, my dear Mathews, I assure you that it was foreign to my intentions to wound your feelings, even in the most remote degree; and I am as much pained in having, even unwittingly, pained you, as you can be.

As to the proposals from Covent Garden, of that hereafter. I have much to say on that subject when we meet. In the mean time, recollect that I wish you, (as I do all others, free at this moment as you are from the great "winter kings,") in any bargain you may make with the superior powers, to stipulate that I may claim your exclusive assistance for *the whole* of my season, in any future engagements which may be formed between us, so that I may be as independent as possible of the courtesies I have hitherto experienced in procuring *leave*, as far as it goes, to engage performers who were originally Haymarketers. This is but equitable. Morris is like *Scrub*, and will say nothing "pro nor con," till there is a peace. In other words, he will neither be an *ass* nor *diss*enter as to any engagement, till the point of management is settled; so, as I am advised "by my counsel, learned in the laws of the land," I go on without him; and you are engaged by me and Winston, in behalf of the theatre; by me, as the director, and by both of us as the majority of the partners. The master's report as to my capability of managing under my present situation is most *particularly strong* against Morris. This is the last of his two great points, and he is licked upon both.

N. B. Send me, as soon as possible, any hints, new fancies, &c , which you think would be effective in your own representation, that I may introduce them in a prelude, which I will write for the opening, and which I purpose to rest chiefly on your shoulders.

I was out on Friday; did not get your letter till post hours were over. On Saturday, up to my neck in business, and couldn't write to you. Yesterday was a *dies non* with the London mails. To day, if length be a dose, I think you have it, and so God bless you. With best wishes and regards to you,

Yours, my dear Mathews, most truly,
G. COLMAN.

Mr. Mathews found it expedient, in the January of this year, to separate his interests from those of Mr. Incledon, who, although universally allowed to possess great goodness of heart, was nevertheless a very unfit ally to a man of regular professional habits, for of such habits Mr. Incledon had no idea. In point of interest, too, Mr. Mathews's individual attraction proving all-sufficient, he became convinced that a partner of any description was wholly undesirable.

It appears that after the separation had taken place, with a full understanding on both sides that it was positive and final, Mr. Incledon repented his part of the arrangement; and applied to Mr. Robins, their mutual friend, to bring about a reunion, which that gentleman with his usual kindness and alacrity had endeavoured to effect; with what success will appear by the following letter. Though evidently written under some excitement produced by the recollections of annoyances, this letter must not be received as a proof of any serious or lasting feeling of unkindness towards Mr. Incledon, for whom Mr. Mathews always entertained the best wishes.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

DEAR ROBINS, Stockton, February 24th, 1812.

I had written to Incledon before I received yours. He is the same inconsistent man I have in every transaction found him to be,—to give such a brief to Counsellor Robins. You pleaded well, but your client deceived you. He *knows* it was *agreed* that we were not to meet again, and he knew that I was making engagements without him before he left me. I do not blame you, my dear Robins, for I am sure what you do is from friendly motives; but as to joining Incledon again, "never shall sun that morrow see."

Yours ever,
C. MATHEWS.

CHAPTER IX.

1812.—Mr. Mathews again at York.—Mr. Incledon's eccentricities.—Mr. Mathews in Edinburgh—His Letters.—Letters to Mr. Mathews from Mr. Colman.—Mr. Mathews in Dublin.—His Letters.—Mr. Mathews's re-appearance in London, at the Haymarket Theatre.

In York Mr. Mathews was again very successful, and he writes thence after his engagement: "Mrs. Siddons played to-night,—about 80*l*. So I beat her by two houses." Indeed his success everywhere was very great, and fully justified his dissolution of partnership. Moreover, there certainly never were two persons less suited to live together than Mr. Incledon and my husband. Mr. Mathews was peculiar, but not eccentric. Mr. Incledon's eccentricities were of a nature very difficult to reconcile with the serious affairs of life. As a man of extraordinary vocal talent, he had been admired and petted, and his nature being self-indulgent, vain, and weak, he often acted as if he disregarded everything but his own wishes: in this he did himself an injustice, for he was a kind and liberal man; but he had lived like a child all his life, and had been so spoiled by everybody about him, that his mind, by nature feeble, had no scope for enlargement. His character, in fact, never *grew up*, and he was as much a boy at sixty as at sixteen. All this tended to make him a very diverting person to those who had no more serious object with him than pleasantry, and no one more than my husband enjoyed his oddities in times of leisure, or related them with better effect, when the embarrassment they were apt to occasion him was past. In fact, Mr. Incledon's eccentricities too much resembled the countryman's description of war and fighting, which he maintained were very delightful—*when they were over.* I shall give a few illustrations.

In the course of travelling together, Mr. Incledon and my husband differed in few things more than in their tastes in eating. Mr. Mathews liked the simplest fare; Mr. Incledon was always in search of an appetite, and therefore was very fastidious about the wherewithal to tempt it. On one occasion at some town where they stopped only to change horses, Incledon, according to a habit in which he indulged, sought out the larder, and seeing a small undressed loin of pork displayed through a glass window with other delicacies, he fell deeply in love with it, and immediately applied coaxingly to the landlord (a portly independent sort of person, with his hands in his waistcoat pockets,) to be allowed to purchase it to carry onwards. Mine host abruptly refused; "he could not sell it,—he should want it for his dinner-customers," &c.; but in proportion as the landlord seemed unrelenting, Incledon's anxiety became stronger; he asked what the joint would be charged to his dinner-customers, and then held out the sum with an addition; but the sulky landlord was inexorable. The epicure increased his temptation until at last he offered double the worth of it; and Mr. Mathews, ashamed of the childish behaviour of his *chum*, left him with the landlord to settle the important matter as they might, and walked on, telling the servant to wait for Mr. Incledon, with the carriage, and overtake him on the road. In a short time he saw it approaching with Mr. Incledon, who, after my husband had seated himself, and the horses were proceeding, took out a handkerchief from a pocket of the carriage with some appearance of mystery, and deliberately placing it upon his knees with evident satisfaction, opened it, and revealed the coveted little loin of pork! "Well," said his friend coldly, "what, you prevailed at last; how did you manage to coax that surly fellow out of it?" Incledon twinkled his eyes:—"Charles Mathews," said he with something of solemnity, "I did *not* prevail. My dear boy, the man was a brute. I offered him all the silver in my pocket. I had set my heart upon the thing, my dear Charles Mathews. I couldn't have eat anything else, my dear boy; so what do you think I did? Don't be angry, Charles, (and here he looked like a child who knew he had done wrong, and dreaded the punishment for his fault,) don't be angry; a man like yourself can have no idea what I feel, who want little delicacies to keep up my stamina. My dear Charles, the man was unfeeling." In this way did Incledon prepare his companion for the truth, and deprecate his wrath. The fact was, he had watched the landlord's absence, entered the larder unperceived, and bore away the tempting prize, leaving the already proffered *double its value* in its place.

On another occasion, he and Mr. Mathews were travelling on a very fine summer's day on the outside of a stage-coach, soon after the death of Mr. Incledon's first wife, to whom he had been greatly attached. A very consumptive looking man sat near him, about whom Mr. Incledon's humane heart made him feel an interest, and he frequently spoke to him, inquired into his history, and found that the poor man was going home to his friends to be nursed. Incledon, when the coach stopped, addressed the poor invalid for the last time, as follows. "My good man, we 're going to leave you. It 's my opinion, my poor fellow, that you 're *bespoke;* you 're now, I take it, as good as ready money to the undertaker. In fact, you 're *booked,*—so there, there 's a seven-shilling piece for you, my good man ; and when you go to heaven, and see my dear sainted Jane, pray tell her you saw me, and that I 'm well!" The poor creature stared, and took the money with a humble bow, but made no reply to this extraordinary address, which he doubtless supposed to come from a lunatic.

Sometimes Mr. Incledon and my husband, rather than oppose a company, would consent to act with it for a night or so ; and on one occasion, at Leicester, Mr. Incledon had agreed during their stay to play *Steady* in "The Quaker;" but after he was advertised for it, he discovered that there was not a dress in "the stock" that he could wear. This was a great disappointment. Methods, however, were devised to vamp up something like what it ought to be. But Incledon was miserable at the make-shift. In the course of the day he and Mr. Mathews were walking up the principal street of the town, when they saw a comfortable plump-looking Quaker standing at the door of a chemist's shop. The moment Mr. Incledon beheld him he began winking his eyes, (a nervous habit he had when pleased,) saying to Mr. Mathews, " Charles, my dear boy, do you see that Quaker there? What a dress he has got on, has n't he? just my size! — I 've a good mind, Charles, to ask him to lend it to me to-night." — " Absurd!" said Mr. Mathews; " you would not think of such a thing?"—"My dear boy," said Incledon, "only consider what a comfort it would be to me, instead of that trumpery suit from the wardrobe. I 'll go in and ask him, Charles; he looks like a good-natured creature." Accordingly in he walked, inquiring of Obadiah for several quack medicines, After some small purchases, he began, in his blandest manner and voice, to address the Quaker upon the real object he had in view:—

"My dear *and* respected sir,"—the man stared —"allow me to explain to you how I am situated, *and* grant me a patient hearing." The Quaker looked patience itself; and Mr. Mathews, curious to hear the result, kept his seat in the shop.

"My dear sir," continued Mr. Incledon, "I am one of a class of men of whom, of course, your peculiar tenets cannot allow you to know much. In fact, I am of the theatrical profession—*Charles Ingledon,*[*] of the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden, first ballad singer in England." (This was uttered with great emphasis and volubility, in Mr. Incledon's peculiar dialect—that of Cornwall.) The Quaker started back, and looked at my husband, as if doubting the sanity of the person who addressed him. Incledon resumed. "I say, sir, I am an actor. I am this night advertised at your —no, not *your* theatre—at the theatre in Leicester, for *Steady*, the Quaker; and it so happens that there is no proper dress for the character, which is one highly complimentary to *your people.* Independently of the want of effect from a bad dress, I am *trewly* mortified to do discredit to so respectable a body as yours. In fact, part of my own family were of your persuasion, my dear sir (the *Ingledons,* of Cornwall, were originally Quakers); and this is an additional reason why I am anxious to do all possible honour to the revered Society of Friends. In short, my worthy sir, without your humane assistance, I shall come before all the gentry of Leicester in a dress very degrading to the proverbial neatness of your sect. *Will* you lend me one of your suits?—you and I are of a size; and in so doing you will at once show the liberality of your character, and keep up the respectability of the admirable body of people so deservedly esteemed by all the world, and by none more than *Charles Ingledon!*"

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[*] The manner in which he always pronounced his own name.

This speech staggered the chemist, who, after a little hesitation,—to the surprise of my husband,—melted by Mr. Incledon's eloquence, not only lent a suit of clothes, but yielded to the persuasions of the singer, to be put into a private corner, in order that he might be an unseen witness of the manner in which the stage upheld his persuasion. That he was charmed with *Steady,* there was no doubt, for he readily confessed this to Mr. Incledon, when he returned the suit of clothes; but he was gravely silent about the merits of *Solomon.*

Mr. Incledon was exceedingly absent at times; and during one of their journeys in a stage-coach, he had been annoyed with wasps, the day being very hot. Mr. Mathews was amused, whenever one of these insects entered the coach, at his taking for granted that, during a ride of forty miles, the same insect had travelled with the coach for the express purpose of alarming him. He would exclaim—"There's that cursed wasp again!" trying (with many imprecations,) on each occasion to destroy it. A grave taciturn man, sitting opposite to them in the coach, seemed to look with great distaste upon Incledon, whose habit of swearing evidently startled and disgusted him. He had, at the close of the day, fallen into a sound sleep. Incledon was still occupied in evading the wasp, which had entered the carriage once more, endeavouring on each occasion, when it alighted anywhere, to kill his persecutor. Intent upon his object, and engrossed by it, to the exclusion of every other recollection, he followed it about with his eyes and hands: at last, the insect rested upon the face of the sleeping stranger, and Mr. Incledon, seeing fair scope and opportunity for his purpose, slapped his hand with most earnest violence upon the cheek of the sleeper, crying out as he did so, in a tone of triumph, "Ha, d—n you, I've done for you now!" It may be imagined what effect this outrage had upon the unfortunate recipient; and it required all Incledon's asseverations, and some additional oaths, to convince the stranger that he had not really intended to *do for him.*

Towards the latter part of his engagement at Covent Garden Theatre, Incledon was much dissatisfied with his position. Braham's "Beautiful Maid" and "Fair Ellen," he found had in a manner superseded "Black-eyed Susan" and "Sally in our Alley," &c. He quarrelled in turn with everybody and everything; and, indeed, was full of ludicrous dissatisfaction at what he termed the public taste for "Italianized stuff." At the time of one of his benefits he was standing in the box-office, chatting, and making several of the performers merry with his strange mixture of complaint, complacency, and droll conceits, when the Duke of Devonshire entered. It is customary for the performers at their benefits to ascertain whether the boxes belonging to the nobility and others are likely to be used by their owners, and if not, to request the liberty of letting them. The Duke had received a letter of this sort, on the part of Mr. Incledon, which his Grace came to the theatre to answer in person; but, perceiving Mr. Incledon, he addressed him instead of Mr. Brandon, the box-keeper. Incledon evidently did not know the person of the Duke, who, approaching him in his kind manner, said, "Mr. Incledon, I have come to say, in reply to a letter I have received this morning respecting my box, that I cannot possibly think of relinquishing it on your benefit night, or refuse myself the pleasure I anticipate from being present." Mr. Incledon looked blank at this—muttered an attempt at "You do me honour;" but in so ungracious a manner as to distress Mr. Mathews and all present. The duke, however, did not seem to notice it; but, turning to the writing-desk, requested pen and paper, when he wrote a cheque, and presenting it to the dissatisfied "Ballad-singer," as he always proudly styled himself, hoped Mr. Incledon would do him the favour of accepting it in lieu of his box. Incledon, with great alacrity, putting on his spectacles, read the contents in haste, and, catching the name at the bottom, made a bow to his Grace, and with a smile said, "My *dear Mr. Devonshire*, I beg to thank you." His Grace smiled, and interrupting him, said, "You forget me, Mr. Incledon; I am altered since I last had the pleasure of speaking to you. You do not, I see, remember the *Duke of Devonshire?*" Incledon's surprise and embarrassment may be conceived; but he instantly recovered his self-possession, exclaiming, "Is it possible! the *Duke of Devonshire!* you were so young when I last saw your Grace, that"—(and then bursting into the *familiar*, added quickly)—"but you young fellows spring up so fast!" The "young fellow" smiled graciously, and wishing Mr. Incledon a full house, left the office,—doubtless more amused than his high breeding would suffer him to manifest.

Mr. Incledon often said smart things in his odd way. His giant foible was vanity. His delight that his fine voice remained unimpaired to a *latish* period of his life was very amusing; and his brother-performers liked to tease him occasionally on this theme, in order to draw forth some of his original phrases.

One day a mischievous wag, diverting himself and those about him with Incledon's irritable humour, which was venting itself against what he elegantly termed "Italianized humbug," (in allusion to Braham's style of singing,) observed, that he was sorry to say some ill-natured people were getting up a report about Incledon that was very scandalous and injurious. The singer affected not to care for what people said, although his curiosity was whetted to an edge at the beginning of the remark; and the actor, affecting delicacy and regret at having so incautiously touched upon the report, and becoming reserved, was pressed by Incledon for a full revelation of it, declaring himself quite indifferent to what anybody might say of him. At last, his *friend* told him that it was a widely-spreading rumour—in short, everybody said that he had lost his voice. "They *do*, do they?" replied Incledon, with the professed contempt of *Sir Fretful Plagiary*, when writhing under similar candour: "They say I've *lost my voice,* do they? Perhaps, then, they can tell who the fortunate gentleman is who has *found it?*"

The evil of swearing upon all occasions was probably contracted by Mr. Incledon in early life, when a boy in the navy, it being also the vice of his day amongst people not highly bred, and, indeed, not altogether disdained in polite life. In later years, when such language became out of fashion, he was so confirmed in its use that he was not aware how offensive he was apt to be; so that, with his really gentlemanlike ideas in many things, he would be sometimes quite unbearable when excited. At other times, he unconsciously mixed up the most objectionable phrases with sacred subjects. In reality, he entertained the most serious impressions upon religious points; but when touching upon them he would so confound the pious with the profane that his very devotion was at times blended with something like blasphemy, without his being at all aware of it. I will relate an instance of this, which Mr. Mathews witnessed.

In his later years, when the taste in music was "converted from what it had been" by the disuse of sea-songs and the introduction of the Italian style, (which, except by Mr. Kelly, had not been much practised upon the English stage,) Incledon thought himself unreasonably neglected by the nobility, who once patronized his singing very much, and in consequence became somewhat soured against persons of rank, and "more saucy with lords than the heraldry of his birth gave commission." One day somebody, with the view of teasing Incledon, observing—"I heard Lord ——— say so," he exclaimed with disdain and anger, "I don't care what Lord ——— says! D—n all manner of lords!"—when an idea crossing his mind, that he had uttered an impious speech, he solemnly took off his hat, and looking upwards with devout earnestness, added, in a low tremulous voice, "Except ———!"

Poor Mr. Incledon! he had an expansive heart, but a defective education, and the example of early associations, had somewhat depraved his manner of discourse. Fortunately for us of the present time, no such offensive habits are to be found even in middle life. The march of intellect has informed the irritable that there are words enough in the English language to express a sense of mental and bodily suffering without resorting to what Richardson's *Lovelace* termed *ardent expressions,* such as made up the sum of a fashionable gentleman's vocabulary in the more formal, and, I suspect, less moral period of hoops and buckram. Fortunately for modern society, "d—ns have had their day," and the ear of decency and propriety is no longer outraged by words and expressions which are now only in use amongst the worst-bred of the London populace.

Mr. Mathews, released from his connexion with Incledon, soon found himself his "own best assistant," and consequently "a wise man," according to Walter Scott's assertion, who, like Shakspeare, never wrote a line that was not built upon truth and nature. The next letter, which I shall give entire, records an important event in his life, one which he always remembered (and who would not?) with pride and delight, namely, his introduction to the great man just alluded to. The two months that preceded this gratification had been passed in the provinces, where he performed with other actors in the regular drama, instead of his Table Entertainment, being still doubtful of his unaided power to afford a whole evening's amusement. His annoyance was extreme at the absence of all talent in the theatres, and the necessity of passing so many hours morning and evening with persons who, as he once said of himself when describing his own early attempts, "mistook inclination for ability," — people, in fact, who, for *acting*, "gave up what was meant for the shop;" and his patience was severely tested. In writing to me from Birmingham he notices the mortifications he underwent in such companies in his characteristic way: —

"I have only time to acknowledge the receipt of yours, for I have been the whole morning with the "Brummagem" company, who have driven me mad. Such a set of ragged rascals! The further I go the worse it is. Oh that the Prince Regent would press all the scoundrels that are now infesting the boards."*

In April all his toils and vexations were rewarded by his reception in Edinburgh, where, after London, no theatre could be better conducted.

While he remained in Edinburgh, he gleaned not *golden opinions* only from all sorts of men, but more tangible results of his exertions and talents. The differences between Mr. Colman and Mr. Morris placed the performers in very embarrassing positions with regard to the disputants, as will be evidenced by the following letter: —

TO MR. MATHEWS.

4, Melina-place, Westminster-road,
4th April, 1812.

My dear Mathews,

Many thanks for your communication from Glasgow, which I received yesterday. I have unavoidably lost a day before I could answer it, by waiting for my solicitor's opinion, who advises that you should *not* answer Morris's notice. And had Morris's notices the effect (which they have not had in any one instance) of inducing performers to throw up their engagements, Mr. Grove, to whom he does not object, would distance *longo intervallo*, as a favourite with the town, all the remaining actors and actresses in the grand Haymarket company. He endeavours to mislead you in respect to Munden, to whose terms he also objected; and he only gives them to you as he (Morris) is willing to have them; and so, probably, he may misrepresent *your* terms to others. As to what steps you are to take, he *might* pay you the salary as it has been agreed upon by the majority of his partners. He attempted to play the same silly game last year, and was foiled. He objected to pay Elliston, but was obliged to pay him every shilling.

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* "The boards," a technical term for "the stage."

Thanks for your hints relative to your proposed personations, much of which I hope to work with good effect into the Prelude, but cannot fix down to them quite so soon as I expected. I shall however have finished (the Prelude, I mean) by the end of this month, so that there will be a fortnight's interval between its completion and production.*

Tell me in your next, when you propose being in town. I hope there can be no doubt of your arriving time enough to prepare yourself for the above sketch, with which we ought to open. I wish you were not going to Ireland. Plague on that sea between us. The proverb does not apply to you, but don't take a dip between Holyhead and Dublin. I am glad to hear your opinion of Chippendale, for I have engaged him. He was of the Haymarket Hundred in his earliest days. I write in the greatest haste; so, adieu! and continue to prosper. Write soon. Ever yours, my dear Mathews,

G. Colman.

P. S. Hook certainly goes to the Isle of France, at which I grieve; but with a good appointment, at which I rejoice; but shall lose a most pleasant, clever, and good fellow. He talks of going in three weeks.

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* This Prelude was not completed; and the "Hints" were, I believe, used afterwards in "The Actor of all work."—A. M.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Port Patrick, Saturday, April 13th, 1812.

I have just arrived here, after thirty-three hours bumping over Scotch roads. On the 7th of May I conclude in Dublin, and then off home full gallop. Edinburgh turned out as delightful as Glasgow was horrible. Beautiful weather—good society—had the luck to see the superfine patterns of the Scotch; and the warmest reception I ever yet met with, because I have considered an Edinburgh audience so difficult to please. Oh, what an ass was I to throw away my time to support Incledon and Bond. It was equal to my best month with the Budget. Harry* says I am the greatest card he ever had. Hundreds turned away at my benefit. I reckon Edinburgh an annuity to me for the future. I have not time to say any more.

Ever, ever affectionately yours,

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dublin, April 14th, 1812.

GREAT ESCAPE.

I arrived here last night, after a most fatiguing journey of above three hundred miles. I wrote you from Port Patrick, to say I was then going to sail with a fair wind; but a calm came on when we were about mid channel, and we were twelve hours going across. Last September I crossed in two hours and a half. I must now tell you of a most miraculous and extraordinary escape! "Providence never forsakes the good man's child!" I could not get a conveyance by the Belfast mail to Dublin, on account of my luggage; I therefore took a place in what is termed the fly — a name given to it, I imagine, because it is the slowest coach I ever travelled in. It is one of those blessed machines that carry ten insides. Not having been in bed for two nights, and being most heartily sick and tired of this Tower of Babel on eight wheels, I determined to stop twenty-five miles from Dublin, at Drogheda, and sleep, and go on next day. I luckily got a bed, though between two and three o'clock in the morning. About four miles from Drogheda, the coach was stopped by a band of robbers—I hear forty strong. The passengers were handed out one by one, and every article taken from them, except their clothes, and the coach was entirely stripped. Property to the amount of 2,000*l.* was taken; and it was the determination of the robbers, at first, to murder the passengers. Each man had his bird—insisted on their kneeling and preparing for death, standing over them with a pistol; but the villains afterwards relented, and suffered the passengers to proceed penniless. I had taken my place to Dublin, and had 300*l.* with me, besides my stage clothes!

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* Mr. Henry Siddons, who was at this time proprietor and manager of the Edinburgh theatre, and beloved by all who knew him.—A. M.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Dublin, May 6th, 1812.

I have just time, amidst the bustle attendant on a day after a Dublin benefit, (quite unknown elsewhere,) to write a few lines, according to promise. Notwithstanding every dirty, filthy, scurrilous attempt at destroying my reputation here, having been uniformly abused by every paper—notwithstanding innuendoes, reports, lies—in short, every thing base, (wherefore I know not,) and which I did not think worth while to relate to you,—in spite of all this, my house last night was crowded. You would be astonished at the receipts if you knew the attempts to prevent it. I never worked so hard in my life for a benefit as I did to prevent robbery last night. I embark on Friday night, but cannot speak with certainty as to the time of my arrival at home. The wind has been three weeks in the east, which is against me for England. Expect me any time after Monday morning: every moment is an hour till then. Pray for my safe arrival; and if you catch me going from home in a hurry —— C. Mathews.

I believe the annoyances experienced by Mr. Mathews in Dublin arose from petty spite, in consequence of his holding himself above the lower engines of the press, which in that day were very venal.

There seemed a fatality, also, hanging over his engagements to Mr. Colman, and that he was doomed to make explanations up to the very last. Mrs. Mountain, by some extraordinary misconception, had advertised him to appear at the Italian Opera-house on her benefit night, at which announcement Mr. Colman naturally took alarm, and remonstrated with my husband upon the evident unfairness of a gratuitous advantage to a rival theatre, instead of reserving the attraction of his first night for the benefit of his employers.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

4, Melina-place, Westminster-road,
My dear Mathews, 8th May, 1812.

I find you advertised to appear on the west side of the Haymarket, the very day previous to your performing on the east! This is *very* prejudicial to the summer house in which you are to assist us for the season; and will give a fine opportunity for court and Chancery charges to Mr. Morris. Surely, my dear Mathews, if you think for a moment, this ought not to be.

I wish success to any individual whom I may know, who takes a benefit at the Opera; but, as the manager of the Summer Theatre, (whose conduct is so malignantly canvassed by one of his partners,) it becomes my duty to prevent your performing on the above occasion, if I have the right to do so. Yours very truly,

G. Colman.

On the 15th of May, Mr. Mathews returned on the occasion of the re-opening of the Haymarket Theatre, and was received with the most flattering demonstrations of welcome. He had been compelled to publish on the morning the following letter, in consequence of the riot which took place at the Italian Opera-house at his non-appearance, as advertised.

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

Sir,—You will most particularly oblige me by allowing me, through the channel of your paper, to explain to the public an apparent dereliction of my duty towards it. Mrs. Mountain having, in some of her printed bills, announced that I would give her the humble contribution of a song, I immediately wrote to inform her that the little assistance I might render her would be incompatible with my engagement at the Haymarket Theatre: and, being quite convinced of the propriety of my excuse, that lady omitted my name in all the bills of the day (Thursday last). Some of the audience having, nevertheless, called upon me on that night, a neglect of that duty which I owe to the public was attributed to me; and it is for the purpose of repelling this imputation, as well from Mrs. Mountain as from myself, that I now trouble you with this otherwise uninteresting statement of facts.

I am, sir, your very obedient servant,

C. Mathews.

King's Road, Fulham, May 15th, 1812.

CHAPTER X.

1812.—Mr. Mathews's imitation of John Philpot Curran, and anecdotes of him, and of Mr. John Kemble.—The tragedian's *aches*, in "The Tempest."—Major Scott Waring's Letter.—First appearance of Mr. Mathews at Covent Garden, in "Love, Law, and Physic."—Mr. Mathews's imitation of Lord Ellenborough in the character of *Flexible.*—The consequences.—Imitation of Mr. Braham.—Mr. Mathews's imitations at Carlton House before the Prince Regent.—Mrs. Jordan.—Theatrical performances of Romeo Coates.—Mr. Mathews's ludicrous imitation of him.—Retaliation of Coates.

About this period we were in the habit of meeting John Philpot Curran, (the Irish Master of the Rolls,) and a great treat his society was at all times. My husband delighted in these opportunities of studying this great man in all his moods; and he might be said not only to have acquired a faithful likeness of his manner, but a perfect copy of his thoughts, so completely could he embody both. It was probable that some person had incautiously betrayed the fact of these imitations to the illustrious original; for one day, meeting my husband in the streets, Mr. Curran accosted him in the following words:—"Pray, Mathews, do you dine to-day at the Major's?"—"Yes, sir, and I understand I am to have the honour of meeting you."—"Why," said Curran, "I had partly engaged myself elsewhere; but, as you are going to the Major's, I shall make a point of joining you;" adding with a significant sparkle from his diamond-eyes, "for I understand you are anxious to get a portrait of me."

Mr. Mathews felt confused, and attempted something like a denial, but he was interrupted with—"Oh, yes; yes, you do, and you shall be gratified; for, though I am not fond of presenting my ordinary features to every dauber that may come in my way, yet, when a first-rate artist, like yourself, wishes to employ his skill, and is certain not only to make a faithful resemblance, but to add some vivid touches from his own fanciful pencil, I think it would be an injustice to deny such a man an opportunity; therefore, I shall *sit*."

Mr. Curran's opinion was fully borne out and justified by the likeness produced by these *sittings*, in which not only his familiar habits, but those of his more dignified moments, were faithfully copied. Nor was it thought by the most fastidious of this great man's admirers and countrymen, that Mr. Mathews ever failed to give, together with his manner, his mind, and even some portion of his genius.

In 1822, long after the death of Mr. Curran, Mr. Mathews, in his entertainment called "The Youthful Days," represented the great orator delivering his celebrated speech upon Negro emancipation, from which he gave a copious extract; and the recital of it drew almost as many tears, and excited nearly as great a sensation, as it could possibly have done when the eloquent author himself pronounced it in court. I may truly affirm, that Mr. Mathews never produced a smile from his imitation of this distinguished man, even amongst strangers to him, without its being accompanied by a due admiration of his transcendant talents.

Calling one day upon a lady at Fulham, Mr. Mathews accosted her, as he often did, (she being an intimate friend of Curran, and fond of the imitation,) in the tone and manner of the Master of the Rolls—which, contrary to custom, she endeavoured immediately to check, but unsuccessfully, until a cry of distress from the adjoining room induced Mrs. Waring to open the folding-door, where appeared a lady in hysterics on the sofa!

This lady turned out to be Mrs. Curran, who had unhappily been separated from her husband for some years. The surprise and agitation of hearing him (as she believed) so near to her, had produced the effect described.

Another time, calling upon another intimate friend of Mr. Curran, Mr. Mathews met him leaving the room with the master of the house, while the lady was endeavouring to induce him to return with her husband to dinner. He, however, professed to be otherwise engaged, past recall ; and Mr. Thompson and Curran, after a little chat with Mr. Mathews, separated from him on the steps of the door. Mr. Mathews, without any idea of deceiving his friend, but merely to make her smile, ran back to the foot of the stairs, calling out, in Curran's voice, "My dear Mrs. Thompson ! I have reconsidered the nature of my first engagement ; I find I can manage to excuse myself from it to-day ; so expect me at six, my dear friend, punctually." He then left the house. On the return of Mr. Thompson at the usual hour to dinner, his wife inquired where Mr. Curran was ? He professed ignorance, and she expressed surprise at his being unaware of Mr. Curran's change of intention, which she explained. As the dinner hour approached, there sat the host and hostess in momentary expectation of the arrival of their guest ; but no Curran ! Another ten minutes — it was very extraordinary ! At last, the master of the house, hungry and out of all patience, questioned his lady more particularly as to the manner and time of Mr. Curran's promise to return. As that gentleman had not quitted his arm for more than half an hour after they had left the house together, it was guessed how poor Mrs. Thompson had been misled ; and the fact was afterwards explained by their recounting to his *portrait-painter* the consequences of his too faithful resemblance.

Unfortunately for me, Mr. Curran, and many other distinguished personages of that day, were known to me at an age when I certainly enjoyed their society, but did not care to remember any of the particulars of it, otherwise I should now have to relate of this extraordinary and highly-gifted man many pleasantries, with which his ordinary talk abounded. I well remember my husband going one morning, by invitation, to breakfast with him in London, at his lodgings, to meet Mr. John Kemble. Albeit not a very early riser, he contrived to reach the appointed spot punctually. Mr. Kemble, however, did not appear; and Mr. Curran was vexed that he who had come so far fasting (for my husband lived at Fulham,) should be kept waiting for one who resided only in a neighbouring street. At length all hope of Mr. Kemble was over, and the "Master of the Rolls" ordered in breakfast for himself and Mr. Mathews, which was just ended when the tragedian was announced; who, stalking slowly into the room, coldly drawled out his excuses for not coming earlier. "He had been ill and asthmatic all night," &c. It was evident to my husband that Mr. Curran was not satisfied with the manner in which this apology for keeping him waiting had been made; he, however, gave orders for a fresh supply of hot coffee, &c., which Mr. Kemble declared unnecessary, stiffly assuring him that "he had already breakfasted." Curran's bright eye flashed with something like pique upon his stately friend, and screwing up his mouth in his peculiar way, he quaintly observed: "Oh! you *have* breakfasted?—yes, yes, I have no doubt you have, and upon a *poached curtain-rod*, if I may judge from your manner and appearance?" Mr. Kemble, however, was really ill. It was about the period when his pronunciation of the word "aches," in "The Tempest," excited so much observation; and though he would not suffer the "sweet voices" of public clamour to shake his conviction of propriety, he might naturally be expected now and then to find his spirits harassed and his health disturbed. The evening before this appointment, Mr. Kemble's "aches" had probably been more than usually acute, and the consequences more severe; hence this "bad night" and his late appearance at breakfast with his friend. Mr. Mathews, who was Mr. Kemble's devoted admirer, noticed one instance of his unaffected good humour while the audience loudly expressed their disapprobation upon his exit, after the objectionable reading in question. He had walked off the stage under the general ban of the pit, with his most slow and measured pace. Mr. Mathews was at the side-scene at the moment, and having his snuffbox in his hand, he held it out to Mr. Kemble as he came off, who, wholly unmoved by the noise and disapprobation, deliberately took a pinch, and looking at my husband with a smile, observed—"Umph! now those good people think they are right!"—and proceeded to the green-room perfectly unruffled by the extra *tempest* that *Prospero* had raised.

The following letter on the subject of this *unpopular* pronunciation, from Major Scott Waring, should find a place here.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

MY DEAR MATHEWS, Shrewsbury, 9th July, 1812.

As I shall see you by to-morrow week I reserve Lucien Buonaparte and his family to that day.

Travelling agrees perfectly well with me, though I came a horrible hilly and sandy road from Worcester to this place. It took me just twelve hours to come fifty miles. The General comes here to-morrow; and as he never starts before twelve, he will knock up the people at midnight in Salop.

I suppose Mr. Kemble is well aware of the high authority, in addition to Johnson, by which he is supported in his pronunciation of "aches;" if not, tell him, with my compliments, to look at Dean Swift's description of a shower. I copied out the two lines, but have lost them. They are not measure if "aches" is pronounced in the common way. No man wrote English more correctly than Swift.

Yours, my dear Mathews, very sincerely,

JOHN SCOTT WARING.

The authority above quoted is not insignificant; and I have heard my husband often say, that Mr. Wroughton and other actors of the old school, men of education and thought, pronounced the word in the same manner; and that it was maintained by them that Garrick gave it the same quantity, otherwise the verse must have halted. But these precedents had neither been noticed nor remembered, strange to say, by the cavillers of the time.

Early in October Mr. Mathews made his first appearance as a regular performer at Covent Garden Theatre,* in the Protean character of *Buskin*, in "Killing no Murder," and was most enthusiastically welcomed. It was observed upon this occasion, that "the Bannisters, Caulfields, and Foote, might give you the *manner* of others with precision, but that Mathews created the *matter* for the manner, for which he was decidedly incomparable."

A farce, called "Sneiderkins," written expressly for him, on account of his extraordinary talent of transformation, was produced soon after Mr. Mathews joined the theatre. In this, as the hero of the piece, his individual exertions were in themselves successful, but the farce was not relished by the audience, and though not altogether condemned, it died a natural death; — being probably withdrawn by Mr. Mathews's advice.

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* It has been already mentioned that he performed there *once*, for the benefit of Mr. T. Dibdin, in the year 1805, his original part of *Triangle*, in the comedy of "Guilty or Not Guilty."—A. M.

By the end of the same month another new piece, called "Love, Law, and Physic," was produced from the pen of Mr. Kenney, which involved the representative of *Flexible* in some subsequent embarrassment. The most prominent character in the farce was given to Mr. Liston, whose *Lubin Log* must be remembered by all who saw it. Mr. Mathews was not satisfied with his part. It was one of those productions which he so frequently had presented to him "to fill up for himself." A friend wrote him a song, called "The Playhouse," to give weight to his character; besides this, he felt that his own exertions to improve the part were more than usually requisite. In one of his assumptions, he had to give a description of a barrister pleading in court. This, in order to be effective, he thought necessary to do in the style of the public men he had heard, and it produced the expected effect. But when he came to give the judge's charge to the jury, which was an imitation also,* the effect was quite astounding to him, for he had no idea of its being so received. The shout of recognition and enjoyment indeed was so alarming to his nerves, so unlike all former receptions of such efforts, that he repented the attempt in proportion as it was well taken, and a call for it a second time fairly upset him, albeit, not unused to loud applause and approbation.

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* Of the Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough.

The next day and the next the press was partially occupied in objecting to and in defending the introduction of a subject by the author, open in such hands to such effects. Just before the commencement of the second performance of the piece, a noble lord (now a marquis) requested an interview with Mr. Mathews at the theatre. On this occasion he contrived, in language the most courtly, yet without any definite expression of his object, or more than a vague intimation of the high authority by whom he was deputed, to make his errand fully understood. His lordship was soon satisfied that he had no occasion to use any argument to influence the performer, for Mr. Mathews proved to him at once that he had fully resolved, from the moment he found his imitation received with such extraordinary vehemence, not to repeat it.

The piece commenced, and a most crowded house greeted him. It was plain that a great sensation had been created. The pit was dense with gentlemen only. The inimitable Liston was not so much attended to as it was usual for him to be; and the anxiety for the judge's charge was fully apparent by the manner of hailing the change of dress which bespoke the period of the representation. The barrister's defence was received with great applause, but when the judge began his charge a restless dissatisfaction appeared, and Mr. Mathews was interrupted by a call of "Imitation! Imitation!" from all parts of the house, and loudest from the pit, which was said to be almost filled with "men of law." The clamour was so great that at length the object of it went forward, and obtaining a momentary pause, respectfully inquired, what was the pleasure of the audience? Here a simultaneous answer burst forth—"The imitation! the imitation!" A gentleman rose above the rest in the pit, and demanded, "Why Mr. Mathews omitted the latter part, and by what authority he was prevented from giving the imitation of the learned judge?"

This was followed by loud cries from the rest of the audience of "Answer the question." Mr. Mathews inquired of his interrogator what learned judge he meant? The gentleman declined giving the name; but another nearer to the stage contrived in a low voice to pronounce the one alluded to. Mr. Mathews then again addressed the audience. He assured them that in any imitation of his, it was neither his practice nor purpose to hurt the feelings of any individual. He had heard that a noble and learned lord was much offended in consequence of the accounts in the public papers. (Here a general cry of "No, no!") Mr. Mathews said "That he did not feel himself bound to a repetition of any peculiar manner, which might be liable to public misconstruction; he had heard with deep concern that offence had been taken at the mode of his burlesque representation of a judicial address, from an idea that it had a personal allusion, which he disclaimed. He bore the highest respect for the constituted authorities of his country, and therefore no power on earth should compel him to a continuance of any mode of representation that might, if he knew it, favour the erroneous opinion which had gone forth on this occasion. As to the words of the judicial charge, they were strictly those of the author; but for the tones in which they had first been uttered, he really felt quite at a loss what to say; he had practised so many voices in the course of his life, that he was not always aware which he might have used for any particular case when it was over. But as the audience seemed to have a favourite, he was willing to prove his anxiety to please them, and would, if they sanctioned the experiment, give the speech in question in various tones and difference of style, which might enable them to point out from amongst the many that which they preferred." This adroit address created great applause. He then proceeded to give the "charge," in imitation of Kemble, Cooke, Incledon, Suett, Munden, Blanchard, and many other public favourites in succession, all with great and some with ludicrous effect, and was still proceeding, when the audience finding his specimens interminable, began to take the jest; their laughter became uproarious, and their good-humour was completely restored by this *ruse* of the actor to evade their unwelcome call. The result of all this was, that the malcontents were completely reconciled to their first disappointment, and allowed the farce to end without more tumult. But it was on subsequent nights sufficiently apparent that the piece had, for the time, lost its principal attraction, though ultimately its own merit, and the acting generally, soon made it a first-rate favourite.

Not long after this, Mr. Mathews was present at a trial in one of the courts, when Mr. Gurney sent the following jocular note to a gentleman whose case was coming on, and whom he saw speaking to Mr. Mathews.

> I shall certainly request that Mr. Mathews shall retire from the court while I open your case, unless he give me his word that he will not exhibit me in "Love, Law, and Physic." J. G.

Mr. Mathews was always remarkably delicate in respect to his imitative efforts being at all obtruded upon the notice of the subjects of his imitation to their annoyance. On the night just mentioned when the audience brought him so closely to answer their urgent calls for *the* imitation which they had recognized on the first night of "Love, Law, and Physic," and when he hit upon so happy an expedient to restore good humour without complying with their wishes—after having succeeded in making his peace with the audience, he turned up the stage and at once perceived why one of his imitations had been so much more effective than the rest. He had totally forgotten, in the agitation of the moment, that Mr. Blanchard (who in the first uproar had retired to the back) was still upon the stage! That good-natured man met him afterwards behind the scenes with a shake of the hand, by way of congratulating him upon his success in pacifying the tumult, and Mr. Mathews exclaimed, "My dear Blanchard, pray pardon me. I entirely forgot that you were still upon the stage. Good God! how coarse my imitation of you before your face must have appeared!" To this apology Mr. Blanchard, with the greatest *naïveté* replied, "What, my dear boy, did you mean *that* for me?" — the stress laid upon the word *that* proving that the one imitation best understood and most applauded by the audience, had been the only likeness not recognized by the original. It need not be told to those who have heard it, that this imitation of Blanchard was perfect.

I remember an amusing consequence of my husband's reluctance to represent any persons in their presence, that occurred soon after our settling in London. Mr. Mathews had known

Mr. Braham in the autumn of 1803, at Liverpool, and it followed that he gave a perfect imitation of him both in private and public life. Of this Mr. Braham heard, and with all the liberality of good sense and conscious talent, he good-humouredly pressed my husband to show him — what not more than one man in twenty is acquainted with — *himself*. In vain did he solicit; when one day dining together at a large party, after much importunity of the kind to Braham No. 2, it was discovered that Braham No. 1 had stolen a march upon his host and hostess; in fact, he had disappeared during the dessert, and it was said had left the house. After this fact was ascertained, it was urged that in the absence of the great original, Mr. Mathews could do no less than represent him, for the consolation of his bereaved friends; and under such circumstances, he at length yielded, and Mr. Braham's absence was fully compensated for the time, by the imitator, and *Mr. Braham* even favoured the company with one of his most popular songs.

When the general enjoyment was at its height, two ladies, between whom Mr. Braham had sat at dinner, seemed as if suddenly discomposed, when a figure rose slowly from under the table, and in tones which seemed uttered as if intended in illustration of the recent mimicry, pronounced, "Very well, Mathews! exceedingly like, indeed! nay, perfect, if I know myself," — and *the* Braham stood confessed! In fact, he had crept under the table, with the aid of several confederates, unseen by my husband, (though by my concurrence,) and thus overheard the imitation which he had before despaired of ever hearing.

The most remarkable result of Mr. Mathews's imitation of Lord Ellenborough in "Love, Law, and Physic," was his receiving a "request" that he would go to Carlton House on a certain evening. On his arrival, he was immediately ushered into the presence of the Prince, who was surrounded by a very small circle. After a most gracious reception, the general conversation was resumed, as it appeared, and he was for some time at a loss to guess the immediate cause of his invitation. At length, the Prince began to speak of the extraordinary sensation Mr. Mathews's recent imitation had caused, adding, that he had the greatest desire in the world to hear it, and concluded by saying, that it would be considered as a favour if Mr. Mathews would then give the "charge to the jury," as he had given it on the first night of the new farce. My husband felt distressingly embarrassed. He glanced round at the party, and his eye for a moment fell upon the nobleman with whom he had the interview on the second night of the piece, and who was looking particularly grave. Mr. Mathews obviously hesitated, which the Prince observing, said, "Oh, don't be afraid, Mr. Mathews,—we 're all *tiled* here. Come, pray oblige me; I 'm longing to hear it. I 'm something of a mimic myself. My brother here (turning to the Duke of York) can tell you, that I give a very fair imitation of Lord Eldon. With respect to yours of Lord Ellenborough, it was not so well when you found it *so taken up* to continue it in public, and I am very glad your own good taste and feeling prompted you to refuse a repetition of it; but *here* you need have no scruples."

Mr. Mathews felt very reluctant to obey the Prince's wishes, though so gently and kindly enforced, for although there were not altogether twenty persons present, yet he could not help feeling that amongst them there *might* be some personal friend of the Lord Chief Justice. However, he was commanded, and *malgré lui,* he obeyed.

The Prince was in raptures, and declared himself astonished at the closeness of the imitation, shutting his eyes while he listened to it with excessive enjoyment, and many exclamations of wonder and delight, such as—"Excellent! perfect! It is *he himself!*" The Duke of York manifested his approval in peals of laughter; and the Prince afterwards conversed most kindly and agreeably upon the subject with my husband and the high personages present, for some time. When Mr. Mathews returned home he declared to me, that, had he had the remotest idea of the cause of his summons to the palace, he would have formed some excuse rather than appear on an occasion so truly embarrassing to his feelings.

In the course of this season he had opportunities of showing himself at Covent Garden Theatre in more regular dramatic characters, such as *Kite*, in "The Recruiting Officer," *Trinculo*, in "The Tempest," &c.; and, during Mrs. Jordan's engagement, for a limited period, he had the advantage of appearing in the same plays with her in several of his favourite old men, as *Foresight* in "Love for Love," &c. The town allowed that he could command their approval in legitimate comedy as well as in farce. Nor was it less gratifying to him to find himself an object in this way with the performers on their benefit nights. The following compliment from the Thalia of the day will be a proof that his acting was appreciated by the best judges in his own profession.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

SIR, Cadogan Place, Wednesday.

I shall be extremely obliged to you if you will allow me to gratify my friends, all admirers of yours, with your performance of *Sir Bashful Constant* in "The Way to keep Him."

I remain, sir, yours,
DORA JORDAN.

Mrs. Jordan not only admired Mr. Mathews's public talent, but, after she became intimate with him, honoured him with many attentions. He was frequently invited to the house of this fascinating actress, and visited her on several occasions of domestic interest. He always accepted her invitations when he could, and became strongly attached to her society. He used to say, that her fine joy-inspiring tones, and her natural and peculiar manner of speaking, always carried a warmth to his heart which no other voice ever conveyed, and seemed to do him good. She was indeed an extraordinary and exquisite being, as distinct from any other person in the world as she was superior to all her contemporaries in her particular line of acting. I believe the following invitation was the last my husband ever received from her hand, and it was carefully preserved by him in his collection of autographs.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Sir, Cadogan Place, Friday.

My son, Captain Fitzclarence, having a party here on Monday the 11th, to take leave of his friends on his going abroad, is desirous of having the pleasure of knowing you before he goes; and at his request I now *do myself* the pleasure of enclosing you a card.

I remain yours obediently,

Dora Jordan.

For some time, Mr. Coates, of eccentric reputatation, had been seeking celebrity, and had succeeded in obtaining at least notoriety, by his public proceedings, and private singularities, if private they could justly be called which were enacted in open daylight and in crowded assemblies. In the former he exhibited himself and his triumphal car,* and in the latter, his collection of splendid brilliants, consisting of shoe and knee-buckles, brooches and rings, and sword-handle, embossed with the same precious stones. It was soon made known to Mr. Mathews by the managers that he would be expected to assail this gentleman with all his powers of ridicule. He very much disliked the system which was growing, of making him a mere representative of *people,* instead of a depicter of *characters.* However, the author of a piece, written for the express purpose of hitting off this *soi-disant* "amateur of fashion," reckoning on the talent for which he had written, was so pressing, and the manager so desirous of the thing being done, that Mr. Mathews went to the Haymarket Theatre to see the *Lothario*, who, if not *gallant*, was *gay,* and made his audience equally so. In short, my husband came away satisfied that delicacy would be superfluous to a man who would consent to die more than *once* in a night, and that such a person would be able to outlive the shaft of ridicule, however sharp its point. So he gave himself up to his fate, and enacted *Mr. Romeo Rantall* in a farce called "At Home," written by the Rev. Bate Dudley; having had but one opportunity of seeing Mr. Coates, namely, the night he was sent to take measure of him for Covent Garden Theatre. Some criticisms at the time will best describe the result:

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* Mr. Coates drove a carriage, of curricle-fashion in some respects, but the body of it was formed like a triumphal car, painted and ornamented so gorgeously that the ambitious Alexander himself would have blushed at so sumptuous a conveyance.—A. M.

The principal character in the new piece of "At Home" was *Mr. Romeo Rantall*, (Mr. Mathews,) a theatrical amateur, invited to entertain the company with recitations. Mr. Mathews entered, dressed up to Mr. Coates's standard, in a fur great-coat, precisely like the "great original," of whom it may well be said that, "none but himself can be his parallel." In this dress Mr. Mathews recited an address, not unlike "The Hobbics" in plan, but much inferior to it in style and matter, inasmuch as it had not the excellently execrable, and exquisitely absurd and ridiculous characteristics of that composition, in which the poet was so well adapted to the reciter, that the conjunction recalled immediately the observation of the traveller on seeing the ass browzing on a thistle, "How sweet has Heaven fitted the lettuce to the lips."

After giving this address in the perfect style of the original, in tone, looks, attitudes, gestures, and movements, not forgetting the interchange of salutations with friends in the stage-boxes—*à la mode de Geramb*, at the Haymarket—Mr. Mathews withdrew, and came out again in the splendid attire of Mr. Coates's *Lothario*—pink silk vest and cloak, white satin breeches and stockings, Spanish hat, with a rich high plume of ostrich feathers.

In this attire he enacted the principal scenes of *Lothario*, in the whole of which, even to the death, he was *Coates* all over, and to the very life. The effect was amusing to the highest degree, convulsing the great majority of the audience with laughter. A considerable *party*, however, manifested a strong opposite feeling. The piece, nevertheless, was given out for representation with a great prevalence of deserved applause.

The piece of "At Home" is the closest endeavour we have seen, since the death of Samuel Foote, to introduce existing portraits on the stage under the thin visor of a varied nomination. The *ridiculum acri* of Horace, and all that, seems to have been full in the author's mental vision when he assumed his playful pencil to

> "Eye Nature's works; shoot Folly as he flies,
> And catch the *living manners* as they rise."

Of the principal person, the *magnus Apollo* of the whimsical assemblage, the blazing comet of the theatrical galaxy, *Mr. Romeo Rantall*, it is impossible to be ignorant; and Mr. Mathews did the part ample justice as a representative; for though it certainly was not *Achilles* in fact, it was *Patroclus* in his armour, and such a semblance as did not dishonour his great original. This illegitimate son of Thespis is invited to Captain Dash's rout, where he receives the combined homage of the party, who invite him to recite a monologue, and rehearse the dying scene of *Lothario;* during which the whole theatre resounded with laughter.

The new piece entitled "At Home" is a sprightly trifle; the main feature of which is the ridicule of the *Amateur of Fashion*, as he calls himself, whose burlesque upon acting has recently excited so much derision. Mathews was chosen as his representative, and a better could not have been found; the tone, manner, gait, attitude, were depicted to the life. The mimicry was complete, and convulsed the house with laughter. It was not, however, suffered to pass without interruption; for it appears that even Mr. Coates has a small party of admirers, who, grieved to see their favourite ridiculed, endeavoured, after the first display, consisting of a poetic address, to prevent Mathews from being heard. The greater part of the audience, however, relished the joke, and answered the clamour of "Off! off!" by a general cry of "Go on! go on!" Mathews went through a part of *Lothario*, and died in the true Coatean style. Nor could he have been excelled by the original amateur himself. The rest of the farce is light and pleasant. The whole of the second act is devoted to a fashionable assembly; the principal purport of which is the introduction of Mathews as *Mr. Romeo Rantall*, to give his felicitous imitation of the unique acting of the *Amateur of Fashion*. This is in itself a treat, and makes up for any deficiencies. The farce at its close was again assailed by the Coatean party, and met with some disapprobation from others; but the majority of the audience were in its favour, and declared it should be performed again to-night.

Notwithstanding this partial opposition—possibly less from particular feelings for Mr. Coates, than from a general principle of discouragement to personality—there was every reason to suppose that the *Amateur* himself was more gratified than displeased at this popular representation of him; and the fact of his presenting himself one night in the front row of the stage-box, and applauding his "double" throughout, will establish the fact that he was not offended at it. It had been a custom of the theatre to send some well-dressed person into a stage-box nightly, that *Mr. Romeo Rantall* might be sure of *a friend* to shake hands with, though sometimes a good-humoured stranger would allow his hand to be taken. On this occasion Mr. Mathews walked up to the box where Mr. Coates was seated, and where the *appointed* gentleman was also placed, and proffering his hand so as to make it doubtful which of the two persons he meant to claim, Mr. Coates seized it with the greatest good-humour, shaking it most cordially, to the uproarious entertainment of the audience; witnessing also the "encore" to the dying-scene apparently as much amused as the audience in general were.

Notwithstanding all this, it appeared that Mr. Coates waited but his time for retaliation, and believed he had the means fairly in his power when Mr. Raymond, "for base lucre," admitted him upon the Drury-lane boards, where he recited "Bucks have at ye all;" after which this modern Zanga gave "blow for blow," as will be seen in the accounts taken from the following criticisms of the day:

It was with real sorrow we noticed the advertisement of the stage-manager, Mr. Raymond, announcing the exhibition of a buffoon for his benefit at Drury-lane; and we understand that he actually was suffered to perform his antics last Saturday night on that stage. He ranted forth "Bucks have at ye all." After which, we are told, he thus addressed the audience:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, — Having had the honour of being imitated at another theatre by a performer of great celebrity, I will now, with your permission, imitate the imitator. If I do not succeed I hope you will pardon me. As it is my first attempt,"—imitating Mr. Mathews—"it will be '*Hit or Miss.*'"

He then retired, and re-appeared in the dress worn by Mathews in the farce of "Hit or Miss," strutted about the stage cracking his whip, and recited several passages in that farce to the great amusement of the audience.

On this subject we can do no more than express our regret that the committee did not interfere to prevent the outrage on all sense and propriety.

He (Mr. Coates) attempted the recitation of "Bucks have at ye all," and appeared in the same favourite costume in which Mathews has so inimitably exposed him, (caricaturing him is impossible,) in the farce at Covent Garden. We say no more of his awkward and absurd attempt, than that it was thoroughly contemptible, and beneath all criticism; but this hero, perseveringly ambitious in obtaining for himself the indignation of the wise, and the ridicule of all, surprised the house by popping forth again in the dress of one of those hopeful ornaments of modern society, "The Bang-up Driver." Here the laugh was excessive. He seemed to be trying to imitate Mathews, and really managed matters with such a perverse dexterity as to fix upon himself for ever all the absurdity which Mathews's imitation can confer upon him. We address ourselves not to Mr. Coates, for his mental malady appears incurable; but we do exhort the directors of Drury-lane never to permit a similar outrage on the just uses of a Theatre Royal.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Mathews commanded to perform at Carlton House.—His previous visit to that palace.—Mr. Pope the actor.—His Letter.—His Dinner with Dr. Kitchener.—Mr. Pope's gourmanderie.—Mr. Mathews's Letters from York and Edinburgh to Mrs. Mathews.

At this period Mr. Mathews received another gracious summons from the Prince Regent to Carlton House, requesting him to entertain the court with some specimens of his "rare talents," on a particular evening, and requiring him to call on the morning previously. When Mr. Mathews arrived, he found the Duke of York with his royal brother, and both received him with the most cordial kindness. The Prince, in his fascinating manner, thanked him for what he was pleased to term his "good-nature," in consenting to gratify him with his performance, adding, he was quite aware that it was a particular instance, and that Mr. Mathews never anywhere else exhibited his powers out of his profession; but he said, "The Queen* has long felt an earnest desire to witness them, and had often been disappointed of that pleasure." The Prince then entered upon his reason for requesting the present call, which, in fact, was nothing less than a delicate consideration for Mr. Mathews's comfort and convenience in the evening. His Royal Highness wished him to make choice of a position in the room most agreeable to his purpose and general accommodation. Perceiving Mr. Mathews in doubt where to fix, the Prince explained to him that he had himself arranged, if no better plan suggested itself, everything for his comfort. "This," said his Royal Highness, "this is the apartment we intend to be in : at the farther end of it I have had your table placed, as you see, there being a door close to it opening into another room, to which you can retire and refresh yourself as often as you feel disposed. I have personally attended to everything within it, and hope you will be pleased." Then leading the way to what proved a double-door, the Prince opened the first, when his progress was arrested by a sight which was enough to make his "two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres." It was no less than a housemaid's broom, and a quantity of dust, deposited in a vulgar heap in the middle of the doorway, which the sweeper, good easy soul, not dreaming that her royal master would have occasion before the wonted hour to pass through these doors, had left to be removed at her convenience. It was whimsical to see the look of the Prince at this discovery, at which the

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* Queen Charlotte.

"Duke his brother" laughed incontinently for several minutes. "Now really," said the Prince, after a brief contemplation of the obstruction, and trying to seem angry,—"really, this is too bad!" and taking the broom in his hand, removed it from the middle of the passage across which it laid; while the Duke, whose laughter was renewed at this action, cried out, "Ay, sweep it up yourself, brother; sweep it up yourself!" The Prince, however, directed a person in waiting to see to it, and then gravely passed through to the other room, followed by the Duke and my husband, the former still laughing immoderately. Alas for a palace! where housemaids are merely human beings, and careless as in less "well regulated families." Very absurd and unreasonable is the surprise we feel when anything within a royal residence is found agreeing with the ordinary chances or defects of common life. I remember Mr. Mathews returning from a subsequent visit to his royal master (on the eve of his coronation), and telling me how much he had been diverted by observing a fracture (or what a sempstress would term a *ladder*) in the back part of His Majesty's black-silk stocking, with which he had unconsciously walked about the whole evening.

But to return to the result of the Prince's considerate forethought for the comfort of his entertainer, for whose performance everything proved as technically arranged as if under the superintendence of a stage-manager. At night, the room assigned for his refreshment contained an elegant supper, and all was prepared that princely breeding could suggest to render everything agreeable to my husband.

During Mr. Mathews's performance, which was his "Mail-coach Adventures," the Prince was not only extremely attentive himself, but would not suffer a sound from any of his visiters to disturb, or an eye to be turned away from the object of the evening; nay, once, when "the Queen his mother" made some observation aloud to a lady near her, the Prince with one of his sweet smiles looked at her, and placed his finger on his lips expressively; to which silent reproof her Majesty nodded good-humouredly, and resumed her attention. But it was remarked by my husband that, although the Princess Charlotte talked frequently and loudly, her royal father did not seem to notice it, or make any attempt to check her interruptions, as he had done those of others; so far from it, that had such a thing been possible, it might have been supposed from his manner that he was unconscious of his daughter's non-observance of his polite example and general injunction.

Between the acts, which Mr. Mathews had made three for the better relief of his audience, the Prince came up to him, and chatted upon the different portions of the entertainment, and the recollections to which it gave rise. At the close of the evening he shook hands with Mr. Mathews, and thanked him in the names of all present, and his own, for "the treat" he had afforded them. All this was very gratifying; but my husband, nevertheless, returned to his cottage, relieved that his efforts were over, always feeling during such tasks like him who, once out of his place and position, sang,

"I wish I was at home again, and had my working clothes on."

In the course of Mr. Mathews's theatrical career, he had known much of Mr. Pope the actor, who, like Quin in former times, was remarkable for too great a devotion to the good things of the table; and had our modern epicure been roused from his morning dream of a capital dinner, with the information that no *John-a-Dorys* were forthcoming that day, he would have exclaimed, possibly, as Quin was said to do upon such an announcement, as he turned round upon his pillow—"Call me *to-morrow*."

I shall insert a characteristic letter of Mr. Pope by way of introduction to an anecdote or two relating to his ruling passion. The first portion belongs to the subject of Lord Shrewsbury's private theatre; but the latter paragraph contains the pith and point.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

DEAR MATHEWS, No. 1, Albany, June 8th, 1813.

The Earl of Shrewsbury, conducted by your humble servant, intends paying his respects to you in the King's Road on Friday morning at eleven o'clock.

I should be glad if you would give him your opinion about his dramatic plan. He wants also to show you his theatre; and if on Friday (when I hope you will see him) it should suit your convenience, he will take you to Bryanstone-square for that purpose.

His *venison is remarkably fine;* and he talks of sending you some. With best love to your dear wife, in which Mrs. Pope truly joins,

I am, dear Mathews, yours faithfully,

ALEX. POPE.

Mr. Pope, some years after this, had a great desire to be introduced to Doctor Kitchener, who, having amongst other things, composed a good cookery-book, inspired Mr. Pope with a great respect for him. He was strongly impressed with the idea, that the author's own "feed" must be of a superlative nature. At last the desired introduction was accomplished; and it followed, from the hospitable habits of the Doctor, that an invitation to dinner was given to Mr. Pope. Several mutual friends were appointed to meet him, and expectation stood on tiptoe for the feast.

Mr. Pope was punctual, too punctual; for the Doctor keeping a mere bachelor's establishment, the servants were unprepared for so early a guest, and he had to wait a long time before even the master of the house was dressed for dinner. Mr. Pope's appetite, which he had starved for this great occasion, was now urgent. At last, the other guests arrived; great comings and goings to and fro below stairs gave "note of preparation." If a man *writes* so well upon good things, how perfect must be his practice, and how exquisite the reality! Thus reasoned Mr. Pope; and at last, "Dinner 's upon table!" saluted his willing ears, and down the company went.

Now as every person present, except the stranger, knew the custom of the house, and that the Doctor never aimed at any entertainment beyond that of wholesome food, the majority of his guests looked all contentment when the simple dishes were uncovered. But who shall describe the astonishment of the expectant epicure?—the fish was not *the* fish just in season — the *mutton* was not *venison* — the side-dishes were vegetables, undisguised, barefaced vegetables! There was no second course; no persuasive ticklings or provocatives of the palate, nothing, in short, but what might be found requisite to a plain family meal! The decanters were filled merely with sherry and port—not even a liqueur apologized for the absence of rarer wines. Pope was an embodied disappointment; he was not talkative, neither was he *silent*, for he invariably refused the offer of of plain food whenever it was sent to him, with a peremptory "*No, I'll wait!*" to the servant. It was beyond all things diverting to Mr. Mathews and his friends, who understood what was passing in his mind, to see Mr. Pope's amazement and ill-humour, of which his kind and hospitable host was happily unconscious.

At last, the party, as if by one consent, took leave. Doctor Kitchener's form of invitation being, "*Come at seven,—go at eleven!*" which Mr. Colman pleasantly amended by reading, "Come at seven,—*go it* at eleven. The rogues enjoyed their poor unsatisfied friend's vexation; and, after agreeing amongst themselves, in Mr. Pope's hearing, that they had never spent a pleasanter day, appealed to him for his opinion of Dr. Kitchener, whom he had so long desired to know. Of course, this inquiry related to Dr. Kitchener *personally*, but Mr. Pope, thinking only of the one thing needful at a dinner-table, and brooding upon his disappointed expectation from "The Cook's Oracle," exclaimed, in tones of the deepest mortification, laying a stress upon every syllable: "What do I *think* of him? why, I think he's the *greatest impostor* that ever existed!" This absurd conclusion entertained his friends exceedingly. Because Dr. Kitchener had written well upon rich dishes, he was to be censured for not cooking them!—as reasonably might we despise an architect for not inhabiting a palace because he had proved himself competent to build one. Mr.

Pope, however, could never again hear Dr. Kitchener's name without undisguised disgust.

I remember several occasions when little plots were formed to shock the fastidious appetite of Mr. Pope, even amongst his most attached friends. It is dangerous with such persons for a man's prominent foible to peep out. No one could take a gross liberty with Mr. Pope. He was a man of high bearing and discriminating mind; but in a green-room, where actors are necessarily more together than persons of any other profession, food for amusement is eagerly sought, and readily seized upon. One actor would describe a feast from which he had just come, and wring his hearer's heart with the delicacies he had missed by his professional duty of the evening. Another would speak of one to which he was invited, and to which he knew Mr. Pope was *not* invited. Mr. Liston had a method of his own, when he wished to interest this gentleman. He would profess a present sharp desire for some nicety, or state what he meant to sup upon, declaring that he knew no treat equal to boiled pork and lobster-sauce, or salt beef with currant jelly, &c. He would proceed in this strain till Mr. Pope was agonized at the depravity of the comedian's taste in eating, and would make up a face at such anomalies, like that of a fine musician when he hears an instrument or singer out of tune. On these occasions Mr. Pope would endeavour, but in vain, to convince Mr. Liston of his vitiated palate.

But it was not only Mr. Pope's theatrical friends who occasionally diverted themselves with his weakness. I remember once a venison dinner being given by an old gentleman, in the absence of his family, to a chosen party. Mr. and Mrs. Pope, and Mr. Mathews and myself, were of the number. It had been settled by the cruel "contrivers of this harm," that Mr. Pope should be asked by the master of the house (in the absence of his son) to take the head of the table, and thus relieve his host from the fatigue of carving. To this proposal, and to our surprise, Mr. Pope cheerfully assented, commencing his undertaking with an alacrity of manner inconceivable to all present. Everybody agreed to eat venison whether he liked it or not, for the sole motive of trying the carver's temper; but on he went with the most patient and zealous exertion; and we saw with glee that the joint was at length shorn of all its delicacies; little more than a mere bone was left. When he had finished his task, Mr. Pope, for the first time, seemed dispirited: throwing down the carving knife and fork, he sank back in his chair as if heartily tired. The master of the house, affecting not to perceive how little remained to tempt a venison lover, "hoped Mr. Pope meant to partake with them of the fare he had so admirably dispensed?" But Mr. Pope declared, he cared little that day for the dish he generally preferred, and talked of taking part of another, when, just as we were all perplexed at his unusual forbearance, and his liberal distribution of "the dish he did delight to feed upon," Mrs. Pope observed that she had inadvertently allowed a plate of venison to be placed before her by the servant, which she had not touched, "but that, if she might be excused, she would prefer something else." Upon which Mr. Pope good-naturedly proposed, as *that* was the case, the plate in question might be brought to him. Every eye turned upon it on its transit from the lower part of the table. And lo! the mystery was solved! All the best parts of the venison had been judiciously selected, packed in close slices, and doubtless forwarded to Mrs. Pope with a look with which she was familiar, and which signified that the meat was to be kept in reserve for him, when he should have helped the rest of the party! Oh, what a masterly defeat was here! Cromwell's dissolution of the Long Parliament created but a tithe of the amazement apparent on every face on this occasion; all were confounded, except the ingenious epicure, whose skilful manœuvre had so outdone all our preconcerted plans. He was wholly absorbed in his triumph, and quietly enjoyed the fruits of it, while Mrs. Pope sat meekly eating some other delicacy, with all the self-complacency of a good wife, who had done her husband's bidding, and secured his good humour for the rest of the day.

At the close of Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Mathews left home once more, on a tour in the provinces, and to the metropolis of Scotland, where he was, as usual, warmly welcomed.

At the beginning of September, Mr. Mathews received an invitation from a Devonshire friend in the neighbourhood of Exeter, who was desirous of a visit from him at this time, as he said he wished him to see a "very clever young man," then performing in the above town,—forwarding, by way of preparation, the following bill, which I shall insert; because it sets to rest the question much agitated at the time of Mr. Kean's first popularity in London, whether or not he had ever seen the performance of Mr. Cooke (his celebrated predecessor in "Richard the Third").

Mr. Kean's Farewell.

For one night only. Hotel Assembly Room.

Wednesday, September 8th, 1813.

Mr. Kean, with the most lively sense of gratitude for all past favours, begs leave to inform the inhabitants of Exeter, that (previously to his departure for the Theatre Royal, Liverpool,) he has selected a most pleasing variety of Entertainments, consisting of songs, recitations, and pantomime, which he will at the above-mentioned rooms have the honour of presenting.

Part the first.—Imitations of the London Performers, given by Mr. Kean before their Majesties at Frogmore Fête. Mr. Kemble, as Cardinal Wolsey; "Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my King, he would not, in mine age, have left me naked to my enemies." Mr. Cooke, as King Richard the Third. Mr. Barrymore, as Earl Osmond. Mr. Incledon, as the Quaker. Mr. Braham, as Prince Orlando. The Young Roscius, as Norval. Mr. Munden, as Sir Abel Handy. Mr. Fawcett, as Caleb Quotem.

The celebrated Comic Song of "Beggars and Ballad Singers." The African Slave's Appeal to Liberty. After which a serious Ballet, (performed only in the Theatres of Paris, and the Opera-house, London,) called the "Instructions of Chiron to Achilles." Achilles, by the pupil of Nature, Master Howard Kean. Chiron, Mr. Kean. With appropriate music, dresses, &c.

Part the second. — George Alexander Stevens's "Description of a Storm," in character, and after the manner of Incledon. Humorous Recitation of "Monsieur Tonson. "Tell her I love her" (by particular desire), Mr. Kean.

Admission tickets, 3*s*. to be had of Mr. Kean, at Miss Hakes's, High-street; &c.

Mr. Mathews's approaching duties at Covent Garden Theatre, however, precluded him from witnessing the "clever young man's" performance, and he was obliged to stay his curiosity, which was destined not to remain long ungratified, though not exactly in so versatile a way as that offered to him by his friend, for Mr. Kean's London engagement soon followed.

The following letter from Mr. Coleridge reached

Mr. Mathews just as he had finished his Bristol engagement, and was subsequently the basis of a delightful intimacy, which terminated, I am proud to say, in the most sincere friendship.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

2, Queen's Square, Bristol,
Monday night, May 30th, 1814.

DEAR SIR,

Unusual as this liberty may be, yet as it is a friendly one you will pardon it, especially from one who has had already some connection with the stage, and may have more. But I was so highly gratified with my feast of this night, that I feel a sort of restless impulse to tell you what I felt and thought.

Imprimis, I grieved that you had such miserable materials to deal with as Colman's *Solomon Grundy*, a character which in and of itself (Mathews and his variations *ad libitum* put out of the question,) contains no one element of genuine comedy, no, nor even of fun or drollery. The play is assuredly the very sediments, the dregs of a noble cask of wine: for such was, yes, in many instances was, and has been, and in many more might have been, Colman's dramatic genius. A genius Colman is by nature! What he is not, or has not been, is all of his own making. In my humble opinion, he possessed the elements of dramatic power in a far higher degree than Sheridan: which of the two, think you, should pronounce with the deeper sigh of self-reproach, "Fuimus Troes! and what might we not have been?"

But I leave this to proceed to the really astonishing effect of your duplicate of Cooke in *Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm.* To say that in some of your higher notes your voice was rather thinner, rather less substance and thick body than poor Cooke's, would be merely to say, that A. B. is not exactly A. A.; but on the whole it was almost illusion, and so very excellent, that if I were intimate with you, I should get angry and abuse you for not forming for yourself some original and important character. The man who could so impersonate *Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm*, might do anything in comedy (*i. e.* that which gives us the passions of men, and their endless modifications and influences, or thoughts, gestures, &c., modified in their turn by circumstances of rank, relations, nationality, &c., instead of mere transitory manners; in short, the inmost man represented on the superficies, instead of the superficies merely representing itself).

But will you forgive a stranger for a suggestion? I cannot but think it would answer for your still increasing fame, if you were either previously to, or as an occasional diversification of *Sir Archy*, to study and give that one most incomparable monologue of *Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant*, where he gives his son the history of his rise and progress in the world. Being in its essence a soliloquy, with all the advantages of a dialogue, it would be a most happy introduction to your *Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm*, which I doubt not will call forth, with good reason, the Covent Garden manager's thanks to you next season.

I once had the presumption to address this advice to an actor on the London stage. "Think, in order that you may be able to observe!—observe, in order that you may have materials to think upon!—and, thirdly, keep awake ever the habit of instantly embodying and realizing the results of the two; but always think."

A great actor, comic or tragic, is not to be a mere copy, a fac-simile, but an imitation of nature; now an imitation differs from a copy in this, that it of necessity implies and demands a difference; whereas a copy aims at identity; and what a marble peach on a mantel-piece, that you take up deluded, and put down with a pettish disgust, is compared with a fruit-piece of Vanhuysen's, even such is a mere copy of nature, compared with a true histrionic imitation. A good actor is Pygmalion's statue, a work of exquisite art, animated and gifted with motion; but still art, still a species of poetry.

Not the least advantage which an actor gains by having secured a high reputation is this;—that those who sincerely admire him, may dare to tell him the truth at times, and thus, if he have sensible friends, secure his progressive improvement; in other words, keep him thinking; for without thinking, nothing consummate can be effected. Accept this, dear sir, as it is meant, a small testimony of the high gratification I have received from you, and of the respectful and sincere kind wishes with which I am, Your obedient servant,

S. T. Coleridge.

CHAPTER XII.

Disposal of the Cottage in the King's Road. — Mr. Mathews's return to Town. — Letter from Mr. Theodore Hook, from the Mauritius. — Private Theatricals at the seat of Mr. Rolls. — Letter from Mr. Elliston. — Mr. John Taylor's opinion upon *Falstaff*. — Mr. Mathews's first appearance in *Falstaff*, in London.

It was Mr. Mathews's wish that his son should be educated at the school in which he was brought up (Merchant Tailors'), and he was consequently placed upon the foundation, by our friend Mr. Silvester, the Recorder. Charles was, as I have before said, intended for the church, and this arrangement would have proved a great advantage to him, in pursuance of that intention. He boarded with the head master of the school, the Rev. Thomas Cherry; but though thus provided with a home, how could the parents of an only child, so young too as he was, forego the means of receiving him as often as a holiday gave occasion? — This, with some prudential reasons, determined my husband to part with his cottage, of which he was so fond, and it was, after a severe struggle, forthwith advertised for sale. Before we were prepared for removal, or could expect to dispose of our favourite abode, a gentleman was introduced to Mr. Mathews by Mr. Ralph Benson, then M. P. for Liverpool, who immediately fell knee-deep in love with our cottage, and all therein contained,—literally so; for from that moment he and his lady, with her sister, who like the "slight acquaintances" in Mr. Canning's "Rovers," had, at the first glance, vowed an eternal friendship for me, became, in fact, our most attached friends.

After the terms for the purchase of the cottage were agreed upon, (that is, the remainder of the lease,) and a quantity of furniture and fixtures appropriate to the place, Mr. Thompson (the gentleman who had purchased the cottage,) pressed for immediate possession. Anxious to accommodate him, we hastily took a house in Cadogan-terrace, which we determined to furnish at our leisure. In the mean time we made our abode in a furnished lodging in that part of Lisle-street, which looked down Leicester-place into the square; a situation determined upon because it was the only one which we could find at the moment without an opposite neighbour, my husband having a morbid horror of eyes "glaring," as he said, upon all his movements. Here, in the month of June, we "located" for a few months, and here our newly-acquired friends visited us frequently; but, to Mr. Mathews's great embarrassment, no mention in any of these visits was made of payment for the "charming cottage," which, however, they invited us to visit once, in order to "show our eyes, and grieve our hearts," with the alterations, (they called them improvements,) made with gilded finery and gaudy draperies, in a place which had derived all its merit from rustic fittings up of bamboo, chintz, and white muslin; while the walls, once overrun with roses on trellis-paper, with looking-glass let into the piers to reflect and multiply any pretty effects, had given place to yellow flock-paper, and gold cornices and frames. All this, as my husband observed to me, was evidence of as bad taste as eating the wrong ends of asparagus would be. He was fretted to see the pretty simple toy transformed by meretricious taste into a vulgar mass of pretension; and we never went again — unluckily, as it happened. Mr. Thompson, however, still "took his ease at our inn," but was too much of a gentleman to mention money, and my poor husband was too delicate to introduce the word, believing from day to day that all would come naturally round. His own honest nature had not suggested the expediency of any formal agreement with a person whose manners and mode of introduction seemed to ensure an honourable result. At last I persuaded him to intimate gently, that his arrangements required immediate funds, and this produced an apology, and a promise, in the shape of a note of hand, payable at a short date. But from this moment the calls of my "slight acquaintance," his wife, became less frequent; her sister, it is true, stepped in, but her visits were also "short and far between;" while "*Monsieur Tonson*" did not "come again." My husband was thus circumstanced, when one day an acquaintance walked into the room with a catalogue in his hand of a sale from which he had just come, saying he would not have missed possessing himself of something that had been ours for the world! What? The truth came out, — the cottage-lease, with all the fixtures and effects, furniture, glass, china, &c., had been sold off by the *gentleman* so artfully, that we had not even heard of his intention, and when we sent to the King's Road to make inquiries into the particulars, the cottage was found closed, and all the Tonsons gone off to France, with the proceeds of the sale in their pockets.

Here was a loss (something indeed of the character of Father Foigard's,) of seven hundred pounds, which we *intended* to receive,* and bad as it proved, there was, as in all misfortunes, some consolation mixed up in it. This wholesale swindler had petitioned hard to have the paintings left which hung up in one small room, (for Mr. Mathews's giant hobby was then in its infancy,) on the plea of gracing the walls until time was ripe for papering and gilding. But as soon would my husband have left behind him an eye or a limb as these his treasures, and thus he preserved what to have been robbed of would have grieved him more than twenty times the money lost. Luckily, too, we had not attempted to furnish the house in Cadogan-terrace; but we had an expensive rent growing there, and this was an additional care. In this dilemma, we put off our removal for a month or so, and Mr. Mathews continued his Haymarket engagement, in broiling weather, in a London lodging, comforting himself with the view of his paintings, hung all over the walls of our sitting-rooms, which had been snatched by his care from the common ruin of the cottage. All he ever saw of the "loved spot" more, was from a peep over the paling, in his rides and drives, when his sight was regaled for some weeks by closed shutters pasted over with the bills of the recent sale! *

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* *Father Foigard*, the Irishman in the comedy of the "Beaux Stratagem," complains that the runaway inn-keeper has robbed him of two hundred pounds, namely, one hundred that he (Foigard) owed him, and one hundred that he *intended* to owe him.

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* It is but just to Mr. Ralph Benson that I explain, that when he introduced Mr. Thompson to our acquaintance, he thought him still in possession of fortune and honour: he was not then aware that he had squandered the one and discarded the other; and Mr. Benson himself was also a severe sufferer by Mr. Thompson's artifices.

Mr. Theodore Hook, whose departure for the Mauritius, it may be remembered, has been mentioned in a preceding letter from Mr. Colman, had not, in leaving England, left behind him the recollection of his friends there. The following communication will be found most interesting and characteristic. As it was welcome to him to whom it was addressed, so will it be now to the public, who are admirers of Mr. Hook's talents.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

La Reduit, Mauritius, March 24th, 1814.

My dear Mathews,

Uninteresting as a letter must be from an individual in a little African island, to you who are at the very head-quarters and emporium of news and gaiety, I shall risk annoying you and write, begging you to take along with you that the stupidity of my epistle proceeds in a great measure from the dearth of anything worthy the name of intelligence; for if I had anything to say, say it I would.

I have received so much powerful assistance from your public talents in my short dramatic career, and have enjoyed so very many pleasant hours in your private society, that I feel a great pride and gratification from this distance, where flattery cannot be suspected, nor interested motives attach themselves to praise, to express how warmly I feel and how duly I appreciate both your exertions and your powers; and, as the lovers say in the Poets,

> "Though mountains rise and oceans roll between us,"

I shall not forget how much I am indebted to you. You have read enough of this island, I dare say, not to imagine that we live in huts on the sea-coast, or that like our gallant forefathers, we paint ourselves blue, and vote pantaloons a prejudice. We are here surrounded by every luxury which art can furnish, or dissipation suggest, in a climate the most delightful, in a country the most beautiful, society the most gay, and pursuits the most fascinating.

This is, by heavens, a Paradise, and not without angels. The women are all handsome, (not so handsome as English women,) all accomplished, their manners extremely good, wit brilliant, and good-nature wonderful; this is picking out the best! The "οἱ ποχχοι," as we say at Oxford, are, if I may use the word, mindless — all blank — dance like devils, and better than any people, for, like all fools, they are fond of it, and naturally excel in proportion to their mental debility; for the greater the fool the better the dancer.

We have operas in the winter, which sets in about July; but the Opera-house here is a subscription; the renters have quarrelled, the manager, Fleury, is in prison, and the affairs of the theatre are before the courts of appeal. In short, the whole island is like fairy-land; every hour seems happier than the last; and, altogether, from the mildness of the air, (the sweetness of which, as it passes over spice plantations and orange groves, is hardly conceivable,) the clearness of the atmosphere, the coolness of the evenings, and the loveliness of the place itself, all combine to render it fascination. The very thought of ever quitting it is like the apprehension of the death or long parting with some near relation, and if it were not that this feeling is counteracted by having some friends at home, whom I shall be anxious to see, there is no inducement that would draw me from such a perfect *Thule*.

I have wept over poor Virginia's grave; I saw her cottage, and an old slave whose father remembers the loss of the St. Guan. I do not know what this gentleman's papa might have been, but I like Munden in *Dominique* infinitely better.* Your neighbour, the Nova Scotia baronet, Sir R—— B——, and his daughter, made a similar exhibition on the same spot. The Roxburgh Castle in which they came out, came to this island about ten days sooner than the captain or the crew expected, and therefore *bumped ashore.*—All the cargo lost, but the baronet and his daughter were saved.

I send you in this letter a piece of the bamboo which I pulled from Paul and Virginia's grave.

I must request you will acknowledge this letter, and tell me some news. I have given up all thoughts of finishing my Covent Garden farce, and have returned Harry Harris the money he had paid me *en avance;* so that you see I am turned lazy. However, I shall be just as happy to hear of all things going on; not but I suppose, by the time I come back to England, I shall hear that Mr. Watkins is the best *Hamlet*, Mr. Higgens the most effective *Archer*, and Mrs. Grogan the sweetest *Juliet* that ever acted; so much will time change circumstances. Pray remember me to Colman.

Make my kind remembrances to Mrs. Mathews, and tell her that I hope to shake hands with her when we are both twaddlers—that is, when she is as much of a twaddler as old age can make her; and that when I return upon crutches from foreign parts, I trust she will direct her *son* to pay me every attention due to my infirmities. By the way, hang me if all your French farces, prints, costumes, and all, arn't here. What shall I do? I will send them — first to Fleury, and desire him to act them here; then I will point out the *effective*, and return them to you. I do assure you I do not know how they go here; but Rolls's farces are here too, which I will take great care of, and bring back with me whenever I come.

---

* *Dominique,* a comic character in the afterpiece of "Paul and Virginia."—A. M.

I hope they are all well. Any private theatre this year? I suppose so, for it is as impossible for an alderman not to love turtle, as it would be for Rolls not to do everything he can to make his friends happy.

Psha! my letter is all about myself. Egotism from beginning to the end. Like Argus, there are at least an hundred *I*'s in it. Well, damn my *I*'s, I will substitute the other vowel, and assure you that, although at this distance, I am sincerely and truly yours, and that you will find even in Mauri*tius* U and I are not far asunder. "If you happen to know" how Hill is, let me hear of him, and make my regards—"pooh! thousands of them. Not thousands exactly," but enough to prove how happy I shall be to hear he is well.

D——, if he has not grown wiser as he has grown older, is I suppose married. In his situation "a joke's a joke." "Blood! but that's too much for friendship." I can't spell the noise he makes with his mouth, or I would add that.

Where is poor Ben Thompson? I find by a letter which has been opened in England, from him to me, that he "damns my iron heart" for having deserted him in his utmost need: wherein he is wrong. I deserted my country; "My native land I bade adieu," but circumstances, *eolum hor animum mutant*, and I am as much and as warmly interested in him and his fate as ever.

Is Mrs. Scott Waring likely to add to the family at Peterborough House? if she does, I think master John and his father will be *two*, and, logical rubs set aside, the *major* and the *minor* won't agree. So that whether in Europe or Africa, the charm and spell are the same. I enclose you Mr. Fleury's letter to me as a theatrical bijou. His way of spelling my name not bad.

Our races begin in July; we have also an excellent beef-steak club; the best Freemason's lodge in the world. We have subscription concerts, and balls, and the parties in private houses here are seldom less than from two to three hundred. At the last ball given by Mrs. Farquhar, at the Government-house, upwards of seven hundred and fifty ladies were present, which, considering that the greater proportion of the female population are *not admissible*, proves the number of inhabitants, and the extent of the society.

I dare say some of my fat-headed friends in that little island where the beef grows, and where you live, fancy that I am making a fortune, considering that I am Treasurer! Accountant-general! Fresh butter, my dear fellow, is ten shillings per pound; a coat costs thirty pounds English; a pair of gloves fifteen shillings; a bottle of claret, the best, tenpence; and pine-apples, a penny a piece. Thus, you see, while the articles necessary to existence are exorbitant, luxuries are dirt cheap, and a pretty life we do lead. Breakfast at eight, always up by gun-fire, five o'clock; bathe and ride before breakfast, after breakfast lounge about; at one have a regular meal, yclepd a tiffen—hot meats, vegetables, and at this we sit generally through the heat of the day, drinking our wine and munching our fruit; at five, or half-past, the carriages come to the door, and we go either in them or in palanquins to dress, which operation performed, we drive out to the race-ground, and through the Champ de Mars, the Hyde-Park here, till half-past six; come into town, and at seven dine, where we remain till ten or eleven, and then join the French parties, as there is regularly a ball somewhere or other every night: these things, blended with business, make out the day and evening.

I shall draw to a conclusion this very dull letter, by assuring you, with my best regards to Mrs. Mathews, and Charles, how truly I am,

Dear Mathews, yours,
T. E. Hook.

Mr. Hook's question of "Whether there is any private theatre this year?" is an allusion to a series of periodical entertainments given by Mr. Rolls, of hospitable memory, whose fine taste and liberal application of it endeared him to a large and distinguished circle of friends for many years.

Among the numerous charms with which Mrs. Rolls's "At Homes" abounded in 1809, 1810, and 1811, were the private plays alluded to by Mr. Hook, who was at once author and actor on these occasions. Though great patrons of the regular drama, Mr. and Mrs. Rolls possessed too much tact to suppose the representation of it by amateurs could be welcome when first-rate professors were within reach. No; the evening's amusement was a *melange* of every kind of lively conceit that wit could devise and talent execute—pieces written for the occasion, with local hits, &c. In these Mr. Rolls (who possessed great dramatic and imitative talent) himself performed, with Messrs. Hook, Mathews, Wathen, Douglas Kinnaird, Henry Higginson, &c.

These entertainments were no less such, in the merriest sense of the word, to the performers than to the spectators. They were productive of many ludicrous incidents. One of these I recollect. Much speculation was excited as to the manner in which Mr. Mathews would manage a sudden change of appearance (for at that period his great power in such matters was not known). It was a whim of his to keep his plan a secret until the very moment for its execution, the transition being from youth to extreme old age. Unknown to everybody, he arranged a temporary shelf, put up at the wing, (the side entrance to the stage,) where he was to disappear one moment and the next re-enter with his change of features. All the characters were upon the stage, expecting with some curiosity and interest this surprising metamorphosis; and he rapidly returned, altered most wonderfully indeed; but to our additional amazement, (and apparently to his own,) there was seen crawling down his forehead, into his eyes, and along his cheeks, a dingy-looking fluid! After a moment's pause, he retreated (as we afterwards found) to wipe it away. The effect of this upon the audience and performers was to cause them to break out into an involuntary shout of merriment without at all knowing why they laughed, unless at the deplorable state in which the actor appeared. This result of his contrivance to take us all by surprise was explained as follows:—He had placed his change of dress heedlessly near a lamp fastened to the wall. The *bald*-headed wig, intended for his disguise, being made of a stiffened canvas, was so disposed upon the aforesaid shelf as commodiously to receive the droppings from the lamp. It appeared that Mr. Mathews, with a view to greater despatch, had laid the wig with the hollow part upwards, in order that it should be in the right position for him instantly to *turn over* upon his head. This he did accordingly, and immediately afterwards rushed upon the stage before he had time to feel the effects of at least half a pint of the oil, which had accumulated in the wig. This strange appearance, and his own evident embarrassment at it, occasioned one of the many broad laughs which were *not set down* for us, and of which he preserved a merry recollection for many a year after. It was on this occasion, at the "Grange Theatre," that Mr. Theodore Hook, then a slim youth of fine figure, his head covered with black clustering curls, made his "first appearance upon any stage," and in no instance do I remember a more decided case of what is called *stage-fright*. He had been as bold and easy during the rehearsals as if he had been a practised stager. All the novices seem fluttered but himself; but when he entered at night as *Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan*, the Irish officer, in "Love à la Mode," he turned pale at the first sight of the audience, and exhibited such palpable terror, that I almost supported him on my arm; his frame shook, his voice failed him, and not a word of his first scene, nor a note of the song he attempted at the piano-forte, (which he had sung so well in the morning,) were audible to anybody except myself.

It was curious to see a person of Mr. Hook's wondrous nerve and self-possession suddenly subdued in such a way, at a mere *make-believe* in a room, containing only friends — invulnerable as he was to fear in all things else! Few, however, who witness in a theatre of any kind the timidity of a debutant, can form the remotest idea of the dreadful feeling of stage-fright. I know but one thing with which to compare it, and that is the first sensations of sea-sickness, and like that, with some people, it is never overcome. Mr. Hook, however, recovered before the piece concluded, and afterwards acted *Vapour*, in the farce of "My Grandmother," imitating Mr. Farley excellently; and a character in an admirable burlesque tragedy of his own writing, called "Ass-Ass-ination," previously to which he hoaxed the audience with a prologue, purposely unintelligible, but speciously delivered; the first and last word of each line were only to be distinguished, bearing in them all the *cant* and *rhymes* of such addresses (some heard and others guessed at, as the speaker's ingenuity served, for of course all was extempore). At the close of this, great applause followed ; and one elderly, important gentleman, who was loudest in the manifestation of his approbation, was heard to whisper to another person sitting next him, "An excellent prologue, but abominably inarticulate!"

It is amusing to observe, in such cases, how easily people are deceived, and how unwilling they are to admit any deficiency in their own perceptions. Not one person in the room was heard by the *initiated* to express a doubt of the prologue being other than what it pretended to be ; and some years after this, when the same hospitable entertainers got up the burlesque of "Chrononhotonthologos" at their residence, Briton Ferry, on Mr. Mathews practising the same feint upon the audience, the same results followed, namely,—great applause at *particular passages,* which he enforced by a certain manner and tone, and at the end universal approbation, as far as *hands* could bestow it. It is true, that when Mrs. Rolls, in quality of hostess, moved about and inquired amongst her friends how they liked the prologue, though some politely declared it excellent, there were others who thought it might have been more humorous. One gentleman had the courage to be candid, and actually expressed a doubt of its originality; nay, he could almost tell the play to which it belonged: and a still bolder critic observed, that the prologue might possibly be a very good one, but for his own part he confessed the effect upon him was much diminished by Mr. Mathews's indistinct manner of speaking it — for, he affirmed, not one word in ten was heard. This remark fired the zeal of a young gentleman, an ardent admirer of my husband, who with some warmth asserted that he, "for his part, heard *every syllable* of it *from beginning to end!*"

The following was the pleasant form of the bill of fare: —

Monday Evening, January 30th, 1809,

Will be presented various dramatic scenes, commencing with a part of Macklin's farce of

LOVE A LA MODE.

Sir Archy M'Sarcasm	By Mr. Cooke.*
Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan	Mr. Moloony, from the Theatre Royal, Cork, *his first appearance (Mr. Theodore Hook).*
Beau Mordecai	Mr. Simmonds *(Mr. Rolls).*
Squire Groom	Mr. Lewis *(Mr. Mathews, in imitation).*
Servant	Mr. Wolsey *(Mr. Lindsay).*
Charlotte	Mrs. Fitzackerley *(Mrs. Mathews).*

A Song by Signor Bartolozzi; after which a Scene from

HAMLET.

Ghost	By Mr. Wroughton *(Mr. Rolls, in imitation).*
Hamlet	Mr. Kemble *(Mr. Mathews, in imitation).*

* Mr. Mathews.

Horatio — By the gentleman who was so well received in Sir Callaghan, his second appearance *(Mr. Theodore Hook)*.

Marcellus, Mr. Latter *(Mr. Pryor)*.

A Song by Mr. Incledon *(Mr. Mathews, in imitation)*; and then a scene from

MY GRANDMOTHER.

Vapour . By Mr. Farley *(Mr. Hook, in imitation)*.
Souffrance . Mr. Wolsey *(Mr. Lindsay)*.
Dicky Gossip — By the late Mr. Suett *(Mr. Mathews, in imitation)*, being his first appearance *since his death*.

And after that the entertainment will conclude with the last piece, that is to say, viz.—a Tragedy from the German, in two acts, never performed for *the first time*; entirely new, with new scenes, new dresses, new decorations, new music, *new musicians*, new curtain, new lamps, and *new everything*, entitled and called

ASS-ASS-INATION; OR, THE ORACLE.

The principal characters by Mr. Latter *(Pryor)*, Mr. Wolsey *(Lindsay)*, Mr. Swehtam *(Mathews, spelt backwards)*.

A Young Gentleman — His first appearance on any stage *(Mr. Henry Higginson)*.

Mr. Malooney — Who was received with unbounded applause in Horatio, being his third appearance, positively the last this evening *(Theodore Hook)*.

A very Young Gentleman, or Infant *Prodigious* . . . . . . Master Venter Loquor.

Princess Fallallaria, married to Blubbero, betrothed to Mumptefoni, in love with Armatevelli . . . . Mrs. Fitzackerley.*

The prologue by Mr. Malooney, who, *it is expected*, will be received with *reiterated* bursts of applause in this Tragedy, for this occasion written by himself.

In Act the First, a Serenade by Signor Garduolobski. And, Ladies and Gentlemen, *that's all*.

Vivant Rex et Regina.

No admittance behind the Scenes.

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* Mrs. Mathews.

The great celebrity of this first attempt at the Grange, induced a repetition on that day twelve months: the following bill of entertainment, drawn up in the same quaint style as the first, will give a taste of its quality.

GRANGE HOUSE.

Tuesday Evening, 30th January, 1810,

Will be presented various dramatic scenes, commencing with a new Farce in two acts, never acted, written expressly for the occasion, called

THE WILL AND THE WIDOW.*

OR, PUNS IN PLENTY.

Lord Gayville	Mr. Scotland.	Slug	Mr. Doddington.†
Old Broomley	Mr. Rolls.	Bailiff	Mr. Pryor.
YoungBroomley	Mr. Hook.	Widow Lovemore	Mrs.Mathews.
Fig	Mr. Powell.		
Brazen	Mr. Mathews.		

The Prologue by Mr. Scotland.

After which (not the Prologue, but after the Farce,) a scene from

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

(Not Bish's, but Cumberland's.)

Penruddock . . .	*Mr. Mathews, in imitation.*	Mr. Kemble,
Weazel . . .		Mr. Blanchard.

And as soon as that's over, prepare! beware! but don't be alarmed, for then comes

ALL IN THE DARK.

Or the O. P.'s and the Actors in the Shades; being a comical, satirical, fantastical, farcical, pantomimical, imitative description of what *might* have happened; in which Messrs. Harris, jun., Kemble, Cooke, Fawcett, Munden, Pope, Braham, Incledon, Blanchard, Kelly, Dignum, Bannister, Lewis, &c., will perform.

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* Written for the occasion by Mr. Hook.

† Mr. Henry Higginson.

The whole of the imitations by Mr. Mathews.*

THE HEIR AT LAW.

Doctor Pangloss .	Mr. Fawcett *(Mr. Rolls in imitation)*.
Lord Duberly	For that night only by Mr. Suett,† who has never appeared anywhere but at the Grange since his death !

And after that, the entertainments will conclude with the last piece, that is to say, viz. for the second time, a Tragedy from the German, in two acts, performed last year for the first time, with unbounded applause; entirely new, with new scenes, new dresses, new decorations, new music, new musicians, new curtain, new lamps, and new everything (used once), entitled and called,

ASS-ASS-INATION.

Sinecapo, Emperor of Hebosco . .	Mr. Pryor.
Blubbero, King of Lapland . .	Mr. Rolls.
Mumtefoni, a courtier, and a good man notwithstanding	Mr. Mathews.
Soleliquoso, a Prince addicted to the trick of talking to himself . .	Mr. Doddington.‡
Armatevelli, a profligate libertine, a courtier in love with the Princess	Mr. Hook.
Fallallaria, married to Blubbero, betrothed to Mumtefoni, in love with Armatevelli	Mrs. Mathews.
The Oracle, or Infant Prodigious	Master Verter Liquor, who never yet appeared.

And, ladies and gentlemen, that's all, except *Vivant Rex et Regina.*

On this our third season, ambition, hitherto a stranger to our corps, entered in the person of Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, an earnest candidate for dramatic fame. He had high requisites, it must be confessed, but he somehow gave a new turn to our hitherto agreeable foolings, and not the one to be desired. His preparations for his first appearance (which was in *Quidnunc* in the "Upholsterer," "got up" purposely for him) were most anxiously made, his dressing for the part, *à la Munden*, most careful, and the marking of his face exquisite; his face, by the by, was perfection when made up for an old man. His fine eyes sparkled with all the eagerness of one whose "bread" depended upon the impression produced by his probationary attempt. He was too much in earnest to enter into, much less to enjoy our mirth at the little *contretems* that took place (which were our chief reward); and he absolutely writhed under the infliction of a false cue, or a wrong position in those who shared the scene with him. Mr. Kinnaird, in fact, would have made a good actor in the line to which he aspired, (Munden's old men,) and would have proved, as a professor, quite as tenacious and craving as this great comedian was known to have been of his exclusive effects and the applauses of his audience. All this caused grave interruption to our plan, while our "unreal mockeries" were adverse to Mr. Kinnaird's more professional ideas. I forget now what more particularly interfered with a continuation of our annual entertainment; but this, the third, proved the last of the Grange performances, and put an end to Mr. Kinnaird's serious progress, and our determined comicalities, with the following pieces.

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* This was a scene after the plan of the *Ombres Chinoises,* acted behind a white holland curtain.

† Mr. Mathews.

‡ Mr. Henry Higginson.

GRANGE HOUSE, 1811.

On Wednesday Evening, January 30th, will be performed a piece in one act, called

THE UPHOLSTERER, OR WHAT NEWS?

CHARACTERS.

Quidnunc	Mr. Douglas Kinnaird.
Razor	Mr. Mathews.
Pamphlet	Mr. Doddington (Mr. Henry Higginson).
Feeble	Mr. Wathen.
Betty	Mrs. Mathews.

After which the Tragedy of

HAMLET.[*]

CHARACTERS.

Claudius, King of Denmark	Mr. Rolls.
Hamlet	Mr. Mathews.
Polonius	Mr. Scotland.
Horatio	Mr. Kinnaird
Laertes	Mr. Hook.
Rosencrants	Mr. Bristow.
Guildenstern	Mr. Pryor.
Ghost	Mr. Wathen.
Gertrude, Queen of Denmark	A young lady.[†]
Ophelia	Mrs. Mathews.

The whole to conclude with a new Farce, in two acts, written expressly for this occasion, called

BLACK AND WHITE, OR, DON'T BE SAVAGE.[‡]

CHARACTERS.

The Prologue written, and to be spoken by Mr. Bristow.

Sir Peter Pudsey	Mr. Wathen.
Captain Seymour	Mr. Bristow.

[*] Hamlet Travestie.

[†] Mr. H. Higginson.

[‡] Afterwards successfully produced at the Haymarket, under the title of "Pigeons and Crows."

Mr. Hervey	Mr. Scotland.
Mons. Blondeau, with an old Song to an old tune[*]	Mr. Mathews.
Patrick O'Rorogoroo	Mr. Rolls.
Tom	Mr. Kinnaird.
Mr. Wad	Mr. Doddington (Mr. H. Higginson).
Louisa Hervey	Mrs. Mathews.
Jingery Jongery Dum Dum,	A Lady (Mr. Theodore Hook).

I subjoin, by way of concluding this subject, the following account, which appeared at the time of one of these entertainments.

Private Theatricals at the Grange House.

January 30th, 1811.

On Thursday last, at Mr. Rolls's elegant villa in Kent, a magnificent entertainment was given to a party of particular friends, among whom were a proportion of the Melbourne family, "Anacreon" Moore, &c. In the evening, the company were agreeably surprised and amused with theatrical entertainments. Hamlet was performed as a burlesque, and, in the *Prince of Denmark* we witnessed Mathews the comedian, whose personation was an irresistibly laughable performance. In the part where the pipe is returned to him, he played "Molly put the kettle on." Mr. Theodore Hook enacted *Laertes*. Mrs. Mathews *Ophelia*. A farce written for the occasion, called "Black and White, or Don't be Savage," was productive of much mirth, in which Mathews gave an admirable delineation of a French *petit maître*. A very neat temporary theatre was erected; the scenery had the merit of being admirably picturesque; and the dresses were really elegant.

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[*] The ludicrous version of "a Cobler there was, and he lived in a stall;" afterwards introduced into his first "At Home," in 1818, with great effect.

The good-natured tone of the succeeding letter will show, that though the cordiality of Mr. Elliston and Mr. Mathews was for a time interrupted, their real regard for each other had not been impaired by that circumstance.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

My dear Mathews, Stratford Place, 28th June, 1814.

Quantùm à rerum turpitudine abes, tantùm te à verborum libertate sejungas. Tull. Hem!

I hear you have an excellent imitation of me, and one of these days I will trouble you to personify myself, and impress me with myself. And now to business.

Have you considered when you can go to Birmingham? It strikes me, if you do not accomplish it next week, or at least before Covent Garden closes, it will be impracticable, unless you have positively made the saving clause which you promised. Let me see you on this subject, for I am now finally arranging my stars.

Yours truly,
R. W. Elliston.

At the close of Covent Garden season Mr. Mathews returned to his favourite London engagement at the "Little Haymarket," as it was then endearingly called. He here made his first appearance in the arduous character of *Falstaff*. Some previous conversations with Mr. John Taylor as to the performance of the fat knight, gave rise to the following letter.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Dear Sir, July 13th, 1814.

I have seen many *Falstaffs*, but none that thoroughly satisfied me. Henderson's was the most entertaining, but his tones were in general more like an old woman than an old man; and he laughed too much, though, indeed, that practice may successfully draw the laugh of the audience. Ryder played it like a ferocious bully. King was quaint, formal, and crabbed. John Palmer, though an excellent actor, could not rise to a due conception of *Falstaff's* humour. He was heavy in it throughout. Lee Lewis was in this part too contemptible for criticism. Cooke performed it like an old lurching sharper. He was shrewd and sarcastic, but wanted easy flowing humour. My idea of *Falstaff* is that he was originally a gentleman, a man of education, as we see by his allusion to logic, and the higher order of his allusions generally; but that he was debased by vice and luxury, yet not to such a degree as to place him on a level with his followers. This is, doubtless, the idea that is generally formed of *Falstaff*. Most heartily wishing you the success which I have no doubt your talents will obtain,

I remain sincerely yours,

J. Taylor.

In looking over four enormous volumes, in which I have accumulated all I have been able to collect in relation to my husband's public life, I find many things which I am proud to record. Indeed, such notices are the only means by which his public merits can be adequately preserved. The theatrical profession, unfortunately, is one made up of perishable properties. Let the actor toil for the best portion of his life to earn a reputation, and attain the highest that can be earned, — what avails it to his memory, but that he lived, and was successful? Every other profession has a posthumous and enduring reward, — the proof and praise of every other artist lives after him in his works; but the "Poor Player" has no legacy to bequeath to the future, but *his name.* The eye that flashed such wondrous meanings is closed; the flexible voice is silent; and unless the written testimonies of his contemporary judges be collected, the prominent merits of departed genius cannot be estimated by those who come after.

On the 15th of July Mr. Mathews appeared in *Falstaff,* a character which, like *Ophelia,* seldom finds a successful representative, because, being a favourite with all readers of Shakspeare, each forms in his own mind a *beau ideal* of the character, which it is not in the capacity of *one* actor to realize. Probably in *Falstaff* the exceeding weight of the dress, which is necessary to describe the "gross fat man," is the general cause of failure. The toil of working through a long play with such a heavy drawback upon the person and spirits, may well lessen the physical force required to keep up the perpetual merriment which is the essence of the humorous knight. Certain it is, that few actors find their powers unimpaired to the last scene, from the excessive exertion alone necessary to embody the character. Mr. Mathews's performance, however, was most favourably received. The following are criticisms from the leading journals:—

London, Saturday, July 16, 1814.

Mr. Mathews enveloped his tall person with so much ease, as to present a perfect image of the fat knight to our eyes; and, in his manner of delivering the jibes and jokes of the character, he showed an admirable acuteness, for he made all his arch replies tell, as the theatrical phrase is, with full effect.

What alone was wanting to make it a perfect representation, was the round volume of voice commensurate with the hollow of the frame whence it came. In straining to give it characteristic force, it came hoarsely to the ear in the latter part of the play. If this defect could be overcome, he would be the best representative of the character now extant on the London stage. He was warmly applauded throughout.

On Mathews's second appearance in the character of *Falstaff*, his success was widely different from that of his first attempt, when he evidently laboured under indisposition. Many years have elapsed since an adequate representative has been found for this "inimitable, unimitated" character. Since Henderson, indeed, not one has appeared, with the exception of Cooke, who deserves to be weighed in the scales of criticism; and Cooke, though he transmitted with full force the shrewd humour and sarcastic raillery, was yet totally deficient in the rich mellow hilarity, which forms the chief characteristic of the redoubtable old knight. It would be an injurious commendation to say, that Mr. Mathews has outstripped his immediate predecessors. His *Falstaff* is one of those singular personifications, to which we can turn from the page of Shakspeare without encountering disappointment from our preconception of the character. Nothing could exceed the felicity with which Mr. Mathews contrived to blend the occasional querulousness of age and infirmity, with the settled habits of riotous intemperance. In the scene when his casual fit of repentance is dissipated by the suggestion of the robbery, the rapturous facility of his transition from praying to pence-taking, was irresistibly ludicrous; as were his plaintive ejaculations, on having been seduced into debauchery by the bad example of the *Prince.* In the scene of his detention after the robbery, by the *Prince* and *Poins,* he displayed none of that saturnine sulkiness, which we have sometimes seen actors exhibit in this passage. Covering his face with his shield, he appeared to be convulsed with laughter, and fairly " gave in," with the unhesitating assurance of one who knew that his wit and his good humour have obtained him a full prescription for his folly and his weakness. Indeed, whether considered with reference to particular points, or to the general impression of the character, Mr. Mathews may be considered as the resuscitator of *Falstaff*, and we sincerely congratulate the public on the restoration to the stage of that amiable personage, whom we estimate so highly, that we should never hesitate to report him in his own words—" Sweet Jack Falstaff—kind Jack Falstaff! banish lean Jack, and banish all the world!"

Falstaff, with his dry humour, gross festivity, and strong and beguiling mixture of simplicity and artifice, the heavy propensities of a sot, and the unwearied *bon-*

hommie of a nature whose elements are tempered with peculiar kindness, is a character requiring powers of a separate class. Mimicry is misplaced where the whole man is, in his nature, a caricature. The laugh which originates in the grimace or stage-trick, or invention of the actor, has no relationship to the gaiety which *Falstaff* is entitled to excite; and, if we were to be compelled to select a representative of the fat knight, it is not improbable that our choice would in the first instance have turned to that one least acquainted with the applause bestowed on mimicry. That Mr. Mathews, under the burthen of this sinister accomplishment, should have found himself equal to any tolerable support of *Falstaff*, was as much as he had a right to hope for. That he should have obtained the plaudits of last night, and deservedly obtained them, is to be set down amongst the most successful and unexpected results of theatrical ability, that we have lately seen. His personification throughout that primarily exciting and important scene, the detail of the robbery, was uncommonly minute. His sudden confusion on being pressed by the *Prince's* retorts, his quick and subtle recovery, his utter and laughable consternation when the full truth put him down; and the broad stare of his effrontery, when he burst out with "By the Lord, I knew ye, as well as he that made ye," kept the audience in a roar.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Mathews's severe accident in company with Mr. Terry.—Mr. Colman's Letter.—Mr. Mathews's re-appearance at the Haymarket in "Hocus Pocus."—His performance in "Love and Gout."—Queen Charlotte's invitation of Mr. Mathews to Frogmore.—Major R—— and Colonel Freemantle.—Letter from Mr. G. Colman.—Mr. Mathews at Brighton.—His letters to Mr. G. Robins on the subject of his pecuniary affairs, and on the effects of his accident.—Letter from Mr. Mathews to Mr. Miller.—Letter to Mr. G. Robins.—His lameness incurable.

"Misfortunes come not single spies, but in battalions."

Mr. Mathews's recent pecuniary loss was destined to be succeeded by a calamity of a more severe and lasting character. On the 22nd of July, just after he had made his second appearance in *Falstaff*, and was prepared to "trammel up the consequence" by fresh improvement upon his successful efforts in that difficult part, an event occurred which altered the whole course of his professional feelings, and suspended his public exertions for a time altogether. Mr. Mathews, whose only means now of escaping sometimes from London smoke, depended upon an occasional drive out of London in his tilbury, had one day arranged to take me with him for an hour or so; when Mr. Terry, full of anxiety and haste, came up to the door just as we were starting, and earnestly requested, as a great favour, that I would resign my place to him, as he had the most pressing desire to be taken quickly a few miles out of town on important and sudden business, and had come for the purpose of soliciting the drive. Of course, I immediately descended, and the two friends drove off. In a few minutes after, a stranger knocked loudly at the street door, and briefly announced that "Mr. Mathews had just been thrown out of his tilbury, and was dangerously hurt," adding no intelligence of the place where the event had occurred. The servant to whom this inconsiderate information was delivered, in his first alarm immediately ran up to me, repeating in an agitated voice the alarming news. I remained in a state of great agitation a full hour, when a coach slowly approached the house, and my husband was taken from it, as I believed dead! This dreadful apprehension was changed to a feeling of almost equal sorrow from the afflicting groans uttered by the sufferer, insensible as he seemed in other respects, while two strangers bore him up stairs to his room.

I can but imperfectly remember the particulars of that day and night, for a dangerous illness attacked me shortly after, which almost caused an oblivion of the preceding horrors, except when I was aroused to some recollection of it by the frequent groans of my dear husband, who lay in the next chamber to myself in agonies too great to be conceived, whenever the surgeons attempted to ascertain the nature of his hurt. When any change of position was requisite, these evidences of suffering were heart-piercing. Only for a time, however, while they were intense, did he allow what he felt to appear to those about him. Impatient in trifles, he was the most calm and enduring of human beings on all great occasions; and it always seemed to me as if he resented petty annoyances, because they arose from petty sources, but that he bent with humble resignation to greater inflictions because he believed they came direct from the Almighty. In the intervals of his excessive pains he became even merry, and sportive as a child. When he was tired of reading, he would amuse himself with his violin, flute, and flageolet in turn; and when he heard a visitor approaching, whom he guessed came with a serious face of condolement to the house, expecting to find him in a most wretched state of mind as well as body, he would scrape up a tune after the manner of a blind fiddler at a fair, and welcome the person with all sorts of drollery. A friend one day laughing at his musical vein at such a time, brought him when he next called two other instruments, which he had purchased at the Hyde Park Fair, held in commemoration of the visit of the illustrious foreigners to England, in order, as he said, to afford him variety in his practice. These the invalid received with much gravity and affected gratitude; when the donor left him, he applied himself to the study of the *Jews' harp* and *Penny trumpet,* in both of which it was his humour to attain a proficiency, before the next visit of his friend. His success with the latter instrument was confessed two or three years after by the public, when in the character of one of the *Master Dilberrys,* he performed "God Save the King," upon it, and convulsed the audience with laughter. In this manner, propped up in his bed, he cheated his pains—and I fear misled his medical men, who probably considered his case less serious, from his cheerfulness under it; for how could they be aware that a man so sensitive and restless upon minor matters, could be capable of such endurance of intense suffering? They did not know that one was the triumph of *nerves*—the other of *heart.*

But to the particulars of the accident. Mr. Terry's business carrying them down Charing Cross, they were proceeding thither very rapidly. Mr. Mathews was driving a favourite blood-horse of high courage (a term which describes an animal more susceptible of fear than any other). Suddenly, perhaps from the sting of a fly, the creature was startled, and before the driver could pull up his somewhat slackened reins, the horse dropped his tail over one of them so fixedly that all control over him was lost, and he trotted onwards with desperate speed. Dreading a collision with one of the many vehicles meeting them, Mr. Mathews used the one rein on his left side, to avoid the public way; when the sudden check of turning into Privy Gardens over the slippery pathway, caused the horse to fall, and the shock threw out to a great distance my husband and his friend, who were both taken up quite insensible. How they were recognized, I never knew, or I have forgotten. Mr. Terry was at first supposed to be the most seriously injured of the two, but happily, in less than a fortnight he appeared as well as ever, having only broken two of his ribs. This result was, I remember, a great source of comfort to my husband in his calamity, whose first anxiety was for him to whom he had, though innocently, caused such a misfortune.

This accident was not only painful to Mr. Terry, and serious to my husband, but at the same time most embarrassing to the proprietors of the Haymarket Theatre, whose whole dependance was upon these two performers for the season. Mr. Mathews had, a few evenings before, made what is technically called a hit, in the character of *Falstaff*, and had, as I have already said, repeated it the night previously to this sad catastrophe with increased effect. The surgeons did not anticipate any lasting bad consequences from the hurt, and even promised a speedy restoration. Under such a report, it could neither be wondered at, that Mr. Colman was anxious, in his distress, for Mr. Mathews's return, who on his part felt a generous concern for the situation of his employer. Sanguine of his speedy recovery, he allowed a character to be written for him by Mr. Colman, for his re-appearance, to which the following letter from that gentleman refers. The importance of the loss sustained by the theatre in the absence of my husband's services is here stated, a fact of which Mr. Colman was too generous to wish to withhold his full appreciation.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

4, Melina-place, Westminster-road,
7th August 1814.

My dear Mathews,

I know you are as anxious about the forthcoming Harlequinade as I am, and therefore trust you will not think me unfeelingly pressing upon you by endeavouring to ascertain as soon as possible when it can be produced; or by submitting to your consideration means which may hasten the accomplishment of our wishes.

The progress towards a perfect use of your leg is, unfortunately, so uncertain, that there is no calculating upon it: it may be four-and-twenty hours, a week, a month, or longer. Now you say, (and I am duly sensible of your friendly zeal,) that rather than they should anticipate us at the Lyceum, you would come forward upon crutches; but I conceive that a good stout stick, such as serves to prop many a gouty old gentleman, might in two or three days answer your purpose.

If they were ready to bring out their Pantomime at the other house, directly, you would directly come forward at ours. Why not then (provided it threatens no serious injury to your general health,) rescue us from the losses which we are nightly experiencing, from our rivals having got the start of us as much as if they were acting "Harlequin the Black or White," instead of their frequent "Frederick the Great," or anything else. It would be most unnecessarily tedious to point out to you, that we have not even common stock to our backs which is not worn to rags; that your attractions in old matter, as well as all intended novelty, is of infinite consequence; that this cursed accident has lost us time; that this is the 7th of August, and that the winter theatres are to open before the middle of September, &c.

But this let me tell you in confidence. I was driven to open, *malgre moi*, much sooner than I wished, by Mr. Morris. I predicted loss till the giants finished their campaigns, which occurred. I then hoped we might pull up our deficiencies, instead of which I have been thrown out of all my projects, and "loss upon loss" is the consequence.

Nothing now remains but the Pantomime to get us tolerably even; which time will render impossible, unless it be produced almost instantly. I can expect no gain this season. I hoped for recovery; but unless you can give your aid, I shall "on horror's head horrors accumulate."

After this preamble, it only remains to say, can you, my dear Mathews, enable me to advertise that the Pantomime will be produced on any day (which you will name) between this and next Sunday?

Yours ever most truly,

G. Colman.

The result of this appeal was my husband's return to the public within a month after his unfortunate accident; and, to this premature exertion may probably be attributed, though not suspected at the time, the lasting effects which not only destroyed his future bodily ease, but ultimately altered the whole tenor of his professional career;—may I say *fortunately for the public?* since it gave an enlarged scope for the exercise of his genius.

On the 12th of August, the following account, published at the time, announces his return to the Haymarket, under circumstances as painful as unprecedented.

A new afterpiece, under the title of "Hocus Pocus, or Harlequin Washed White," was produced here. It is a species of performance which defies criticism; partaking at once of farce, comedy, tragedy, and pantomime, and possessing the novelty of three Harlequins, and apparently designed for the purpose of introducing Mr. Mathews to the public again, after his recovery from his late severe accident.

The prologue was spoken by Mr. Terry, and contained some good points, which were loudly applauded. After it was concluded Mr. Terry addressed the audience as follows:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen.—Before the curtain rises I am requested to say a few words to you in behalf of an invalid. Mr. Mathews (*applause*) still continues to suffer much, very much, from his late severe accident; but he trusts that his anxiety in coming forward thus early to perform his duty to you, and to fulfil his engagements here, will atone for his deficiencies in bodily activity, requisite to the character he is about to sustain. (*Great applause.*) A former very celebrated proprietor of this theatre once enjoyed the fullest favour as "a devil upon *two* sticks," and it is hoped, nay, it cannot be doubted, that you will now extend your utmost indulgence to a "harlequin upon *one*."[*]

It is needless to add, that Mr. Mathews was on his appearance greeted with the loudest applause. He is still extremely lame, and required a crutch-stick for his support. His right side seems to have particularly suffered, and it was difficult to separate the idea of pain from even his happiest efforts.

The following impromptu on this performance appeared in a newspaper at the time.

> It seems, if obliged on his crutches to play,
> At Harlequin, Mathews will aim.
> If so—very fairly the public may say,
> 'Tis the first time his efforts were *lame*.

In one scene, where he disguised himself as "Jacky Long Legs," it was impossible to conceive anything more perfect than the modification of his voice in imitating a child six years old.

It might be expected that the example Mr.

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[*] The celebrated proprietor will of course be recollected—Mr. Foote, the Aristophanes of his day, had the misfortune to lose his leg by an accident similar, I believe, to that of Mr. Mathews.—A. M.

Colman had set, of writing a character for a lame man, would be followed by similar productions, in order to bring so favourite an actor constantly before the public; and, therefore, before the end of the month, a comedy of great merit, called "Love and Gout," was produced with success; and, as a gouty man, Mr. Mathews again hobbled about the stage in more pain than he allowed the public to imagine. The following notice of the piece describes the result of his efforts.

Haymarket, 28th August, 1814.

The piece, "Love and Gout, or Arrivals and Marriages" was well received; for which the author* was principally indebted to that incomparable performer Mr. Mathews, who bore the principal weight of the piece upon his shoulders, and thereby earned a new laurel for his brow. Of Mathews, we have lately heard it said, that he is not so much a comedian as a mimic. From this judgment we entirely dissent, and feel convinced that it only arises from his being, unfortunately, too often compelled to make use of his inferior talent. There is no performer now on the stage who excels him in delineating the union between tetchiness, whether arising from misfortune or disposition, and those qualities of the mind that are called humorous. This is one of the most legitimate sources of comic effect, and its representation by Mathews is always of the most legitimate kind.

A few days after his re-appearance in public, my husband received a note from Lieut.-

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* Mr. Jamieson.

Colonel Stephenson, stating that he had the Queen's command to inform Mr. Mathews that her Majesty wished to see him at Frogmore Lodge: — "Having experienced so much gratification at being present at Carlton House when Mr. Mathews exhibited some specimens of his great talent, her Majesty is very anxious to see him again, and wishes he could make it convenient to come to Windsor on that day." Independently of my husband's lameness, he was bound to appear every night at the Haymarket Theatre, and thus had a good excuse for not obeying the royal command, which, however gracefully couched, put his whole frame in a state of perturbation. In consequence of this disappointment, and of her Majesty's flattering anxiety to see Mr. Mathews, a ridiculous colloquy took place with a gentleman of our acquaintance, whose ideas of an actor's profession, though divested of all personal prejudice against it, were not very favourable to its general dignity; his notions of a public performer being somewhat allied to that of the Leeds Croppers, whom I have described as classing all kinds of exhibiters under the one word "laker," *player*, making no distinction between the heroes of Richardson's show, and the educated representatives of Shakspeare. Colonel Freemantle had received an intimation from the Queen that she meant to honour him with a visit at his cottage near town, and at the same time made known her wish to see Mr. Mathews there some evening during her stay. But her Majesty was doomed to be disappointed in this instance, as in the former, first from my husband's horror of private exhibition, and also on account of his professional engagements, which, as before, demanded his attention in preference to any other. Major R——, who had been our neighbour at Colney Hatch, having heard Colonel Freemantle speak of the Queen's wishes respecting Mr. Mathews, and his own consequent embarrassment, (Mr. Mathews being a perfect stranger to him,) out of zeal for his friend, and utter want of perception of the Colonel's delicacy in such a matter, professed an influence with my husband, and undertook to arrange the matter satisfactorily. One morning, therefore, he called on us, and in his peculiar manner told his errand. "Why Mathews, my dear fellow, I 'm come to tell you what you 'll be delighted to hear. The Queen, Queen Charlotte, my dear fellow, wants to see you; and she has told Freemantle to invite you to his cottage to entertain her! only think of that, my dear fellow! You must go, you must go, you know. I 've promised Freemantle that you shall,—he 's such a good fellow, you know—you 'll be charmed with him."

Mr. Mathews coldly replied, " I 'm very sorry, but I have a great dislike to such requests, and never perform to private parties. I have been to Carlton House, but I cannot make up my mind to put myself in a similar situation for anybody but my future sovereign. I cannot go to Colonel Freemantle's."

"My dear fellow! consider the Queen — the Queen of England! You must go, you know; it's next to high treason to refuse!"

"That may be," answered Mr. Mathews; "but it so happens that I am engaged at the theatre at the time you mention every night: so I couldn't go if I would. Besides, it is not the Queen, but Colonel Freemantle, who invites me, and even he does not ask me himself."

"No, because I told him you would come with pleasure, you know; and that you were a good fellow! So you must go."

At last my husband convinced Major R——, that his going into any gentleman's house without his especial invitation, or otherwise than as a private gentleman, was entirely out of the question.

Poor Major R——'s countenance dropped from its usual animation into an expression of absolute despair. "What is to be done? I've pledged myself to Freemantle, my dear fellow! It isn't like any other promise, you know; — there is nothing to be substituted — no talent like yours to be found, my good fellow! Nothing less than *Mathews*, you know, would be endured! It must be a *gentleman*, my dear fellow — an intellectual treat, you know, altogether. Something above the common run." There was, as he said, " no resource," and all was a blank! My husband expressed himself, of course, much flattered at such high estimation of his " rare talents," although he remained quite firm in his determination not to comply with the present requisition of them. At length Major R——, all at once recovering from the reverie which followed his observation that there was no man of comparable talent or gentlemanly bearing, who could supply Mr. Mathews's place in the presence of royalty, exclaimed in a tone of delight, his eyes suddenly twinkling with triumphant recollection, " Why, Mathews, my dear fellow!—do you think we could get *Gyngel?*"

Perhaps I need not explain that " Gyngel" was a well-known conjuror, whose booth was conspicuous at every fair, from that of Bartholomew to Parsons' Green. This was " a sinking of the sublime" indeed, and my husband laughed heartily at the unconscious and well-meaning Major's high appreciation of his merits.

When Covent Garden Theatre re-opened, the proprietors naturally wished to secure the talents of Mr. Mathews; but his proper feeling for Mr. Colman made him resolute not to forsake him until the Haymarket closed. This caused a little irritation between the parties whose separate interests required my husband's support. The following letter shows that his honourable conduct was felt by Mr. Colman.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

My dear Mathews, 12th September, 1814.

I pity the vulgar pomposity of my *ci-devant* ———, and lament to see him so clumsy a time-server; for surely, the ferocity of zeal which makes him so disgusting to his old connexions is not required by his new ones. But stage-dignities have turned his weak head; and had Balaam driven ———, he would not have taken the talking of an ass for a miracle.

Never mind old *Crazy*,* though he calls himself "Mayor of Coventry." To make "assurance doubly sure," I have seen the *Mayor* himself, since I wrote to you on Saturday, and all is right. Go on till the close of our season, *meo periculo;* and spite of the empty fulminations of the great Deputy Jupiter Tonans. Your own conduct towards me in this business has been just what I have ever found it in all our dealings—most clear, upright, and honourable, and marked too, with that friendly feeling with which I am,

My dear Mathews, most truly yours,

G. Colman.†

At the close of the Haymarket season Mr. Mathews went to Brighton, for the advantage of the *shampooing* baths, which Mr. Carpue had so strenuously recommended; and there upon his crutches he at least felt the benefit of air and rest. Here, however, he was not without his cares, as the following letters will prove: they at the same time show, that in pecuniary matters he was more sinned against than sinning. It is indeed remarkable, that in every instance of this kind of difficulty, he suffered from a too easy belief in the honour of others, and a kindliness of disposition which would not let him say nay to those who required his service or assistance.

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* A superannuated character in "Peeping Tom."

† The person to whom Mr. Colman alludes was one deputed to do his master's bidding, that is, to perform any disagreeable duty from which his employer felt glad to escape.—A. M.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

DEAR GEORGE, Brighton, October, 1814.

I feel no small degree of compunction at taking up your valuable time, knowing, as I do, how it is occupied, not only by business, but by the calls of friendship.

At this moment, distressed in mind as I am, I know not another person to whom I would unreservedly tell my whole and real situation. I need not repeat to you what the year 1814 has proved to me. Up to that time, you knew my secrets. In June last I expected to be free—to be emancipated after years of struggling. To produce this most desirable feeling, I parted with my heart's blood — my comfort — my cottage. A superlative, double-refined swindler overturned all my hopes of happiness, and frustrated all my schemes, and has left me in the most miserable situation to which I have ever yet been reduced.

I need not ask you to fancy the situation of any man, rich or poor, depending on 700*l.* on a certain day, much less myself, selling property to pay debts. I reckoned, in addition to the 700*l.*, 150*l.* certain at Birmingham: one week before I should have received it, one single *little fly* robbed me of all hopes.* If I could trace the origin of it, that regular fiend who presided over my fortunes on the 1st of January, 1814, was perched over my head when I took my somerset; otherwise why was not Terry, who had no Birmingham engagement, hurt as much as myself? Well, I came here in reasonable confidence of recovering my health in a month. I now fear that it will be a tedious time before I have the use of my limbs. My situation now becomes melancholy, and for the first time since my Fulham misfortune, including my most calamitous tumble, my spirits are depressed; and two letters which I received yesterday, one of which I have enclosed you, and the other not of the most pleasing nature, quite overset me. I looked round for some one to whom I might unbosom myself, when from unwillingness to give useless pain, I found I could not even do it to my wife. It is hard upon you, — but you are the only person I could find that I knew would sympathize with my feelings. You know, I dare say, the relief of telling the cause of low spirits, if it is only to one person: now hear!

I have never been placed in a similar situation regarding the theatre, but fear and suppose I cannot expect my salary at Covent Garden till I join the company. I have never sent to the Treasury, because I could not endure a negative. Jones told me they paid him during a long illness; but I have not asked, for to say truth, I don't know that it is just I should be paid: perhaps you can tell me if there are any hopes. Well, if not,—I may add that loss to 850*l.*! I have had the rent of three houses to pay this year! In short, I tell you, that when I came here I had but 50*l.* upon earth! and the enclosed threat, which, as it never happened to me before, I don't know the extent of, has opened my eyes to the alarming situation in which I am placed. Certain it is, that without some help I cannot get on; and if my lameness continues till Christmas, which I really think it will, (Green has been two years suffering from a similar accident,) I am ruined. I know but one plan to retrieve me, and that is to have a furlough, and, as I cannot act, (for never will I limp upon the stage again,) to give my entertainments, which I did when at my worst at the Haymarket, by myself, and put some money in my purse, in the country.

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* Mr. Mathews always accounted for the accident with Mr. Terry, by assuming that the bite of a fly had caused his horse to run away.—A. M.

Now, my good fellow, I know the hardship of pestering you with such affairs, but I cannot help it. If any mischance had robbed me of your friendship, I would almost destroy myself rather than relate all this to any other human being. Pray settle the income-tax business for me immediately on receipt of this, as from the threat I suppose neglect is fatal. Before I knew Thompson, I never had such a threat, and therefore I am ignorant. If you will explain also to Reid, whom I know, how long I have been from London, it will take off some little of the disgrace. My letters are sent to me twice a week, and I therefore did not receive the letter till yesterday. Now, after my statement, I know if you can point out any mode of assisting me, you will. Is it difficult to raise a sum for my present purposes, till the time of my Covent Garden benefit? for if I have no extra aid, and Thompson never returns, I have no other hope. You probably may know of such things; tell me how to set about them; at all events I know you will give me your advice. I have told you all.

Pray write to me as soon as your more important avocations will allow; even that will be a consolation, for I am now most sadly cut. You will, I am sure, do me the justice to say that I bore my miseries with tolerable philosophy, but now they rush upon me, and ——— could not have felt more anguish when he destroyed himself than I did yesterday. I am proportionately better by the tedious relation I have doomed you to endure. God bless you.

I am ever most gratefully yours,
C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear George, Brighton, Thursday, October 1814.

I shall be much obliged to you to mention the subject of the salary to Harris, for I cannot. Harry should have shown you my last letter to him, for I regularly reported progress, and then I should not have appeared inconsistent. I then told him, that the change of weather had thrown me back again. But do not suspect me of staying an unnecessary hour in Brighton.

I had got thus far in my letter when I received a message from my wife, (who, to add to my other enlivening circumstances, is confined with a fever and sore throat to her bed,) to say, that she had received a letter which it was absolutely necessary I should see, though she was loath to show it to me. I cannot enter at length into the story, for it would fill the sheet; but, by all that is sacred, I have no more right to be annoyed by it than you, and am no more answerable. In brief, I accepted a note, drawn by William Simpson upon me, which was due two or three days back. Before I left London I left more than the sum in his hands. He was to take up the note; and so little had I to do with it, as I thought, that he would not give me a memorandum of the day it was due. I relied on him, as I never knew him otherwise than correct and punctual. Well, to-day Mrs. Mathews received a letter from Mrs. S—— to say, this note was paid to D———, in Queen-street. By some extraordinary fatality, it was not honoured. Mr. Simpson is in Leicestershire, and Mr. D——— wrote a letter yesterday, an extract of which she has sent, to say, he had given orders to have us both arrested! which I know would please him more than the money. Now this never has happened to me yet, and I think my nerves are not in a state to bear it. I am in a tremble, and shall be till I receive your answer. It would be rather hard if it should happen, after all, for another's neglect. If I had time to explain all, you would pity me. I can bear it, because "the *fiend*" who began the year with me is consistent; and it is only an additional torment which I am doomed to endure in 1814. Would it were over!

I condole with you most sincerely on the melancholy condition of your brother. I can enter into all your feelings. It has been my fate from infancy to witness similar scenes; nine brothers and sisters, and my first wife, died of consumption.

C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

My dear George, Brighton, Oct. 16, 1814.

I thank Mr. Harris, as well as yourself, for the 50*l*. I think, as there is no precedent, it is very liberal, and I shall always be of that opinion, and acknowledge it. I am sorry he recollects with such a feeling the Haymarket business. If I had deserted Colman during his last four nights I think I should have been a scoundrel; and you would have thought so too. I shall quote from Colman's own language, to Master Harry :—" You who are yourself a king, sir, can scarcely blame poor fellows for their loyalty." My conscience will always acquit me in that transaction. I am sorry he is so very anxious for my return. Does it not stand to reason that my own anxiety will direct me to everything to effect a cure? Did not Carpue say that the sea air was most material to me. He also said that electricity would have no effect. He approves highly of shampooing; so does Andrews. If shampooing set me on my feet in a week, would it not be childish to give it up because I am not well in a month? People are more impatient about me than I am about myself. They do not know the tediousness of effecting a cure, when muscles are injured. Carpue told me that it was very improbable I should be well before spring. Andrews's assistant, in his absence, told me, that he thought it would take six months from the time it happened. Mrs. Siddons did not bruise her hip-bone. No electricity can touch my injury. I want great action of the muscles: electricity cannot give that action; it can only promote circulation. Shampooing does give that action. I have now the perfect play of every muscle, from the practice. Ten days ago Andrews said, " Try to lift one knee over the other without the assistance of your hands." I endeavoured to do so, but in vain. " That," he said," is the greatest effort the large muscle in the thigh can effect." On Tuesday last I did effect it; and no one can doubt that it was Mahommed who effected that; even Andrews unwillingly allowed he did it. Everything is done now but the recovery of the bruised bone; that is internal, that is deep-seated, and no human aid can assist its recovery; that must be effected by time, and by time alone. A knife-grinder's machine might as well be applied as electricity. So much for defence of my staying here a little longer. My own opinion is, that I have done wonders in the time that I have been here, and that I shall get well much sooner than Andrews or Carpue have predicted.

C. Mathews.

TO MR. MILLER.

Dear Miller, Brighton, October 21, 1814.

I really feel very much flattered by your kind inquiries, and proceed without delay to answer your letter, and to give you all the satisfaction in my power. The accounts you have heard of me have no doubt appeared contradictory; but it is very easy to be accounted for. The effect the shampooing had in the first instance was perfectly marvellous. You recollect the only mode in which I could move with my crutches. Mr. Carpue told me that it would depend very much on my own care and caution whether I recovered before the spring, and I believe Andrews, who is now here, had very little expectation of my perfect restoration till that time. In one week after my arrival here, Mahommed took my crutches from me just after I came out of the vapour bath, and beckoned me to follow him. I told him I could not stir from the spot without my crutches. He insisted upon it that I could walk across the room without them. I tried, and actually followed him without any assistance into another room. He the next day prepared two sticks for me, and kept my crutches. I then walked about with the sticks. Mrs. Gibbs was here at the time, and on her return to town recounted this wonder; and of course, everybody imagined that in another fortnight I must be well. I never thought so. Mr. H. Harris wrote to me, and I saw he was too sanguine as to my speedy return. I thought deception was useless; and I rather checked his ardour, by telling him that it must yet be a work of time, for I am resolved I will not go on the stage again till I can dance. When I wrote to Robins I was in great despair. I was as lame as on the first night of the Pantomime: but it was to be accounted for; north-easterly winds had been prevalent for some days, and I had been riding on horseback by the advice of Mahommed, and also of Andrews; this produced a stiffness which has now left me. I now can walk with very little pain with only one stick, and in the house without any; and I really think I shall be quite well by the 12th of November. I have done wonders in the time. Now mark me, I would not wish Fawcett or Harris to know that I have said thus much to you, for though it is against my interest most wofully to be here, yet I will not have any more pity from an audience. I will be really well when I am well: and I wish to avoid hints and innuendoes that I am wanted—" and though I don't press your return, I cannot help saying we want you," and so forth. Are you satisfied? As to *Sir John*,* I need not say I should like it; but if I put in a claim, would not Fawcett say, " Is the chair vacant, ha?" I am delighted to hear of Miss O'Neill's success. I flatter myself that I was one of the first, when I saw her play at Newry, to recommend her to Dublin, and also one of the first to recommend her to Harris. I will tell you another thing, Master Miller, she is a most charming actress in comedy; her "Irish Widow," if she should act it, will set the town half mad. You will think it strange, but her representation of *Cowslip*, which she played to my *Lingo*, struck me first, and I was charmed with her.

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* *Sir John Falstaff.* His appearing in this character on his return to Covent Garden was suggested to him, but, with his usual fairness, he pauses with regard to it, Mr. Fawcett being in possession of the part.—A. M.

Yours, believe me most truly,
C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear George, Brighton, October 24, 1814.

I should have answered your very kind letter sooner, but waited in hopes of hearing from S—— n, and also that I might relate the termination of the affair that so shook me. On Friday evening I was called out of the dining-room to speak to a Mr. Mansell. I went out, and was arrested. Unfortunately, however, for Mr. D——n, being prepared for it, I did not feel shocked at all: that is the advantage of fretting away one's misfortunes before-hand; we don't feel them when they come. Unfortunately, moreover, for him, (for I am sure revenge was his only object,)* the bailiff was the kindest and best-humoured of all bailiffs. I told him I felt confident that the note was settled that very day in London, and that if he would wait till next morning, I thought he would have a letter. He said he knew me, and my word was sufficient; and on my giving him 20*l.*, all I had in the world, went away satisfied — all settled in three minutes — nobody knew one word of it, which that rascal shall know soon. What do you think of the attorney who would execute such an order without giving some notice of it? The only gentleman of the three was the bailiff. The rest of my life I devote to the complete study of annoyances for D——: hoaxes—boxes of bricks from Scotland, Ireland, and even from the Mauritius. I have a rare colleague there. Marrow-bones, cleavers, chimney-sweepers, order for goods, every possible contrivance that can render his days miserable and his nights sleepless;* because the vagabond knew that I was not indebted either to him or S——n. The bailiff showed me his letter. D——n certainly made the attorney believe that I was the greatest rogue in the world: "it was my general character and infamous behaviour *on former occasions*, which made it necessary that he should not lose one moment on the receipt of the writ; but seize me directly." The man would not, however, (for I was described in the letter, marks and all,) do it publicly, but waited till evening, and then whispered me in the passage. He said, that if he had not known me, he should have supposed I had committed a few forgeries at least; "but, sir," continued he, "I knew it was some spite by the manner of the letter." I wrote to the attorney explaining the whole affair, and insisting upon knowing what D—— had said to him.

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* This person had on some occasion formerly taken offence at something unintentional on my husband's part.—A. M.

I will not annoy you by saying or expressing my sense of your conduct to me. I could be almost inclined to say with *Zekiel Homespun*, "I do hope that you may tumble into misfortune, that I may help you out." I wish to remove from your mind an idea that seems to have taken possession of it, that I have any inducement to stay here, but the recovery of my strength; be assured I shall be most anxious to get well,—but I yet doubt it; and if it does not take place by next month, I must get leave to vagabondize, or be ruined. God bless you, my best of friends,

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* It may be believed that no part of this threat was put into execution, for, as usual, his anger evaporated with the occasion.—A. M.

Ever most gratefully yours,

C. Mathews.

It must be evident that Mr. Mathews knew his own case best, even better than his surgeons, as the result, — namely, twenty-five years sad experience of incurable lameness proved; not that he then believed he should be so afflicted for the remainder of his life; but his scepticism as to a speedy recovery was justified by his own feelings, although his fortitude, and frequent high spirits, misled his surgeons. These will sufficiently excuse and account for their miscalculations of the extent of the injury he had sustained.

CHAPTER XIV.

Letter of Mr. Poole to Mr. Mathews: reception of Miss O'Neil in London. — Mr. Mathews's reply: Miss O'Neil in *Cowslip*. — Letter of Mr. Henry Harris. — Mr. Mathews's Letters to Mrs. Mathews from Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon: his visit to Warwick Castle,—Shakspeare's House,—An entertaining Landlord. — Letter of Mr. Mathews to Mr. J. Robins: his lameness and hopes of recovery.—Facetious Letters of Mr. Mathews to Mr. Poole: Warwick Castle, — Odd Epitaph. — A Character. — Mr. Mathews's Letters to Mrs. Mathews from Stratford-upon-Avon: Dry Snuff. — Messrs. Dowton and Bannister at Stratford.—Romeo Coates. Shakspeare's relics.

Amongst the several agreeable friends who came to Brighton during our stay there, Mr. Poole* was one who contributed to enliven the poor invalid; and even after his departure cheered him with his pleasant letters. The following is one of them.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Dear Mathews, 27th October, 1814.

Because I have not made a formal inquiry, I suppose you think I am utterly regardless about how you are going on; I have been expecting a letter from you for several days past, but I perceive you are one of those odd people who do not answer a question till it has been put to them; so here—

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* Author of the popular farce of "Paul Pry," &c.

Are you mending?
Do you improve?
Are you getting better?
How do you get on?
Are you better upon the whole?
Do you still shampoo?
Is Mohammed still your shampoo-er?
Do you benefit much by shampooing?
Can you use your hip freely?
Ditto thigh?
Ditto toe?
Do you turn your toe out as much as you did?
Do you turn it more in?
Do you use it so much in the ballet-style?
Or do you use it as other people use their toes?
Shall you stay long at Brighton?
Shall you soon be in town?
When may we expect to see you?
In one word—
Let me know all about you.

Why do you not write, you idle dog? Is half an hour as difficult to be found as ever? You are an idle man, and I am almost a busy one, yet, you see I can steal a few minutes to write to a friend. Follow my example, and be industrious. I have seen Miss O'Neill twice, and as times go that is worth something. You have, no doubt, heard so much about her, that anything I can say will "come tardy off;" yet I'll tell you what I think of her. She is an actress of strong and well-directed sense, and powerful feeling; her voice is good, particularly in its under tones, and without effort or affectation, or anything like the common stage style of speaking; it is modulated entirely by the thought or feeling she has to express. The same may be said of her countenance, and, nearly as much of her action. This, though always graceful and correct to a certain degree, is sometimes excessive, as, for instance, in her soliloquy with the phial, as *Juliet.* And this appeared to be more faulty than perhaps it might have done in any other actress, because it was so strongly contrasted with the usual chasteness and delicacy of her performance. If you were to ask me what passage she delivered best, or what point she made most effective, I should be at a loss to tell you. She is not a mere maker of detached points, a strong marker of individual passages; she does not point a word into something that sounds like an epigram, and which, by dazzling you for a moment, leaves you in doubt whether it be right or wrong; but her excellence consists in exhibiting a regular, unbroken, and consistent character, from which she never departs for the purpose of drawing down a huzza. This is not a style of acting which draws down any noisy demonstration of applause; but her audience is subdued into quiet attention, the truest testimony of approbation that can be to a tragedian. She makes you feel without any apparent endeavour to do so; and, when the curtain falls, you are satisfied of her merits, and of the correctness of your own opinion, because it is evident you have not been deluded by trick or quackery. When I speak of her consistent display of character, I speak more particularly of her *Belvidera;* her *Juliet* is not quite so true. For tenderness she is unequalled. Such a mixture of delicacy and affection, I have never seen. She has put her foot upon the necks of all our tragedy ladies. One of the great Keanites said to me, "Certainly Miss O'Neill is very clever, but it is accounted for by her having acted a good deal with Kean at Dublin." Now the fact is, that no two things can be more dissimilar than their style of acting; and I said to him, "I'll believe that, when you can persuade me that the Indian jugglers are conjurers by inspiration, or, that to perform so simple an operation as that of putting your hand to your head, it is requisite to go twice a day to their exhibition." She cannot be compared with Mrs. Siddons at present; but she is much nearer to her in excellence than any of the others are to Miss O'Neill. We may now hope to see a play well acted occasionally. Kemble is acting to bad houses. His *Cato* was on Tuesday to an empty house; many of the dress-boxes literally empty. We have nothing new here to tell you. "Policy" was very dull. "John of Paris" in great forwardness at Covent Garden; and Arnold has a sly piece upon the same subject, in preparation at Drury-lane. For the last few days I have passed a very *See Dan Terry* life, — he is quite well, and preparing himself for *Governor Tempest*. Remember me to Mrs. M. and Miss Johnstone. Is Kelly still with you?— how is he? Tell Johnson I have not forgotten him; of all our stranger acquaintance, he is the only one worth a remembrance. Does the colonel unbend?

Yours ever truly, JOHN POOLE.

Perhaps I shall send the Champion on Sunday, if it contain anything worth reading. Are all the Royal Family well? You are, no doubt, as gay as we are dull. If so, you must be the gayest of the gay. Yet the playhouses are sometimes both crammed full on the same night!—To-night, two *Hamlets!* Kemble and Kean.

In reply to the playful part of this excellent letter, the following absurd rhapsody will show how my husband's constitutional vivacity showed itself, when only but for a moment released from the overpowering pressure of circumstances.

TO JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

Dear Poole, Brighton, Nov. 1, 1814.

There is not any circumstance in human existence so gratifying as the emancipation of intellect. It is a most pleasurable sensation to witness the effervescent emanations of a playful genius. When the dawn of reason presents sentiments of future expansion, how futile are the dogmatical attempts of temporary intruders. Believe me, young sir, it has created feelings of indubitable ecstasy in my simultaneous mind to witness your ardent and exuberant curiosity. Your inquiring mind shall be gratified.

Slowly.
Weekly.
Decidedly.
As well as I can wish.
Certainly better upon the whole.
Three times a week.
Yes, his wife might be dangerous.
It has relieved the muscles.
No doubt of it.
As well as the hip.
Better than either.
Nothing like so much.
Much more.
By no means.
I cannot answer that question.
It would not be prudent to give a reply.

Within three days after the House of Commons are unanimous.

Why, how can I answer that question?

Are you answered?

Well, here we are, just as you left us, — immediately opposite the Pavilion, in a double-distilled house, with a gold button and loop, and tied at the knees with tripe. You have delighted me much by your account of Miss O'Neill; it is a sensible, dispassionate critique, and I feel perfect confidence in its correctness and justice. She is a sort of *elève* of mine; I saw her in the north of Ireland in *Cowslip*, and even in that was much struck with her. I recommended her to Jones in Dublin, and ultimately to Harry Harris. I think very highly of her comedy. The idea of her copying from Kean is delicious: that is a genuine bit of Keanism.

I have improved so much in my riding, that I have gone out twice with the hounds. Yesterday they turned out a bag-fox, and we had a good run of three miles; afterwards we had several runs with hares. Charles was out, and rode manfully; to be sure he had one tumble, but you know that may happen to any man; besides it was a grey pony. After he had relieved himself of his heavy weight, he galloped off for Brighton. Oh how I longed for you to manage him. I am sure you would have enjoyed yourself in galloping over the Sussex hills.* To make use of a strong expression,—I think I am getting better. I hear that you have very wet weather in town; it is still delightful here. I have not been disappointed of my ride one day. I have heard a whisper too that you have had some fogs; this is the 1st of November, but you will know that before this reaches you. How unfortunate—well, at the end of the month after next, we shall have only three months till May; and then we may confidently look forward to the summer;—well, that is a comfort. Your pun I admire. There are such a cursed collection of names in this house at present, that I cannot make a suitable return; there is only one old woman to encourage me, and when she goes to bed I sing "Begone dull Keir." Now don't be running all over the town saying I have not written to you. I was determined to fill my sheet at the expense of common or uncommon sense: so as I have bestowed my tediousness on your worship, be quiet, fool. Now, my friend, write again and your letter shall be well received, — and paid for if I have any change. Mrs. Mac Kenley has got the tooth-ache, Mr. Joseph Madox is now playing whist in the middle of a nap: he snores so loud I must conclude. I have answered your questions, filled the sheet, and have now only one duty to perform, which is to say,

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* Mr. Poole's utter ignorance of horsemanship at this time, manifested at any attempt to ride, occasioned him much good-humoured badinage, which he received with equal good humour and drollery.

I am, dear Poole,
un-in-one-breath-utterably yours,
Charles Mathews.

The following is a kind letter from his manager, Mr. Henry Harris.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Dear Mathews, Nov. 5th, 1814.

While you are deriving advantage from the shampooing, sea air, and riding, I should by no means advise you to quit that certainty for any uncertain remedy. In what I said I only meant, that when from the bad weather setting in, you come to a stand-still and cannot report progress, then you had better come to town, and try electricity, which, whatever is said to the contrary, I know from experience in many cases, is of great assistance, when properly and regularly applied by a skilful operator, very seldom to be met with, but which my friend Lowndes most certainly is.

Robins quite misunderstood me in stating that your acting at the Haymarket weakened your claim for a salary: as there is no precedent for any such claim, without having joined the company, how can it be weakened?

I might have lamented that you ever did perform there after your accident, as it has so much retarded your cure, and deprived us of your assistance; but under all the circumstances, I do not see how you could, without the sacrifice of their interest, have done otherwise, more particularly previously to Mrs. Gibbs's benefit. After that, by taking advantage of my command, you might have got away for a week sooner; but I agree with you, that it is quite useless to refer to what cannot now be prevented, and so let the subject drop.

I wish it was in our power to do more for you, for I assure you I feel much for your losses; but I hope that the succeeding year will be as lucky as the last was unfortunate, and that you will be able to bring up your leeway.

Robins mentioned something about your performing your Budget for a few nights previously to your playing in London: if you can put a few hundreds in your pocket in that way, you know I should not object to it.

Miss O'Neill established herself last night in *Isabella*, as the first tragic actress of the day: her attraction is likely to continue, having real merit for its support.

The Macbeth* of to-night I should think would be different.

I find you do not like the little piece that was sent you: it had an effect in Paris, and I thought, with your suggestions, it might have done.

Ever yours sincerely,
H. Harris.

In consequence of Mr. Harris's permission, my husband resumed his public labours, performing his entertainment of the "Mail-coach,"—first at Brighton to crowded houses, and afterwards at the various towns, whence he writes to me on my return home.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Birmingham, Dec. 15, 1814.

You have really been more anxious and uneasy respecting my accident and the ultimate consequence than myself. I cannot reward your kindness at present but by immediate attention to your desires and anxiety. Instantly on the receipt of your letter I consulted a surgeon: the experiment has been made,—I have been perched up against the wall before two persons, at distinct times and places; and the unqualified opinion is, that there is not the minutest atom of difference between the two feet when close together,—both legs are of a length. I have just arrived at the hospital with the surgeon, who has brought me here for the benefit of the best electrical machine in the town. I have had the satisfaction, for the first time since my accident, of seeing two skeletons, one with, and the other without muscles. I have therefore a good idea of the nature of my accident, which has been described to me practically and theoretically. I am almost afraid **** is a blockhead; the surgeons here laughed at the *socket of the muscle.* I *may* have one—but it is peculiar—a gift, like ventriloquism, for I cannot find it in the remains of the two respectable gentlemen I have seen, and one was a very skilful mail-robber and murderer—six feet four. I have just been electrified, which I shall be every day while I am here. Now write me what Carpue says,—will he promise me to be quite well again? I don't care one penny if it is two years to come, for I never wish to act again; and that will please the *Inquisitorial* Editor. I'll be only a "mimic." The surgeon here thinks I shall walk again. As soon as Carpue promises this, let me know. In great haste, but delighted to save the post, and you, dearest, a moment's uneasiness,

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* At Drury Lane.

I am ever (lame or active) yours,

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Stratford, Dec. 19th, 1814.

I think I said in my last, I should not quit Birmingham before Monday; but, thank Heaven, I have made my escape!

I have accepted an offer from the manager of Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon, to fill up my time till Christmas, when I join Crisp at Shrewsbury, that I may enjoy an opportunity which never before presented itself, of wandering about the place where the divine Willy,—"Sweet swan of Avon," was born. I open there tomorrow, and play a second night on Thursday. I have to-day been over Warwick Castle, one of the most magnificent specimens of Gothic architecture now left in the kingdom. There are some glorious pictures by Rubens, Rembrandt, lots of Vandykes, very interesting indeed. Original portraits of the Charleses, Henry VIII, Mary Queen of Scots, and one that would have made you scream, —a portrait of poor old George's mother, and of him when an infant, and so like him! They showed me the ribs of the dun cow that Guy slew, certainly large enough for an elephant; his sword, above four feet long; his walking-stick, seven feet; and his porridge-pot of bronze, weighing eight hundred lbs., and capable of containing one hundred gallons, which the porter gravely told me Guy could eat half full for his breakfast.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Stratford-upon-Avon, December 20th, 1814.

If Mr. H. Harris had been sincere in his proposal, I certainly did not mean to give up my present plan till I was well, and certainly feel so little confidence in that, during the winter months, that I thought myself justified in making engagements till towards the latter end of January; but the moment I saw " gouty man," in yours of yesterday, I saw my fate. Where are the promises of " not thinking there was such a man as me?" &c. If they once begin to write lame parts for me, I know the consequence. The people will be disgusted and soon tired of me. I have a horror of presenting myself before them again in a hobbling state. I have trembled for fear some such thing should occur, because, having done it for Colman, how can I refuse Harris? this must be said. I hope

Harry may not approve the piece with all my soul;[†] and wish that * * * * * had had a fresh visit from St. Vitus in his right hand, when he took the notion in his head of writing for me. I want to "put money in my purse." After Christmas I shall have a better chance. I have now to contend with the worst week in the year,—and the last week, the next worse to that. The weather has been dreadfully against me: it has poured (and is pouring dismally at this moment,) every day since I left you at Bath. I am now writing within three doors of the house where "the pride of nature and paragon of poets" was born. Between the showers I have been gazing at the house,—it is now a wretched butcher's shop; but being assured that the front has remained in its original state, I have felt very delightful sensations in the sight. I have not ventured in yet; but, as soon as I have, I shall send you an account of it. The master of the White Lion here is a most entertaining character: he has travelled much, and to good purpose. He speaks French admirably; he is an old fop, like *Blissit* in the face, and *Polonius of Brighton* in his figure and walk. He is (much to my delight, for I feared to meet with it here,) an enthusiast about Shakspeare. He has a painting of him in the house, which has belonged to the Lion for upwards of a century: he swears it is original,—would I could believe him! But he has got a mulberry-tree in his garden, which I never heard of before: this I really believe, from all I have heard, was planted from a sprig of the "real original." He has had Kemble, Bannister, Dowton, Siddons, Jordan, Catalani, &c., at his house, and has something to tell me of them all. He has seen all the French actors, and really is quite one of us in all his conversations and manners. It is a great solace to me, for the manager here is the thorough-bred, real, determined, technical thing. The *orse* and the *ouse*! Oh, when shall I hear the letter H again in its proper place?—in this county it is not known.

[†] A piece with a lame man, intended for Mr. Mathews.

C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear George, Stratford-upon-Avon, Dec. 22nd, 1814.

I think you should make some little allowance for me, and not condemn me unheard. You imagine, I have no doubt, that I have a great deal of idle time, and that I write a great many letters to London friends. The fact is, I have not such time; if I had, depend upon it that I would much oftener write to you, and, next to my wife, with greater pleasure than to any other human being. But, you will recollect, I travel a great deal; I play three or four times every week; and have rehearsals with bands. I must walk a great deal, or I should certainly be lame all my life, for I am evidently worse after sitting an hour or two; besides this, I am sure you will not blame me for writing nearly every day to my good wife: if ever woman deserved such attention, she does. Well, say you, now you have done. Have I, Mr. George? Now, sir, since my arrival at Stratford I have received letters from Messrs. Faulkner, Macready,* Robertson, Crisp, Ryley, and Johnston, managers. I have business with most of them. I am obliged to correspond about terms, time, send my bills, answer those who apply to me, &c. If you cannot imagine for me, with this sketch, what I have to do, I am sure description will be useless. Briefly, it *cannot* be my disposition to neglect you.

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* The father of the tragedian.

With respect to Mr. Harris, I cannot construe anything "unfavourably" that he does. I have every reason to be highly satisfied with every part of his conduct to me, and shall always be willing to acknowledge it. But no language can express the horror I have of another lame part. If it come to the worst, I would rather play an active part, and affect to be well, than court pity by presenting myself with an author's studied apology for my misfortune. I am sure, though it is hard upon the managers, that it is to their interest to have me quite well, or not at all. However, I shall act by your advice, and will make no further engagements than I have already entered into, which will take up the time you mention; I will then return and show myself to you all, and the crippled carcass shall be at your disposal. For my own part, though my spirits, thank God, have been uniformly good, I cannot help doubting a complete recovery. Not one of my surgeons will ever cheer me for a time by assuring me it will be the case. Andrews evidently doubts it, and by my wife's silence, I fear Carpue is not sanguine. As to advice, I have sought it in every shape, and in every place. Rely on it, it is a case that no surgeon can *operate* for, or for which they can ever recommend any system. "Time alone can assist me." This is universal—no variation. If mortal man could have relieved me, I am sure Mohammed would have restored me; but so far could he go and no further. I have not altered the most minute part of an atom since about the 1st of November, but I promise to deliver up my body to you and Harry Harris in a month, and I will not have a voice in the disposal of it. I can't say more. I did mean to enter into an explanation of my receipts, good, bad, and indifferent; the causes of the latter; desperate weather, wet nights, damp theatres, &c.; but briefly this for your private ear. I have already received, or rather cleared, 350*l.* Truth.

I have had a most delicious treat here in seeing the house where the "Sweet Swan of Avon" was born. His tomb, monument. and picture in the Town Hall; also Garrick's. This has amply compensated me for a disappointment; for between you and me, the manager took me in. I thought Stratford a larger place, and that there was a theatre. So there is, but it is a barn! and holds 28*l.*! But I have got a bit of the real mulberry-tree.—Coates played here on the first of December to a full *barn!*

Yours ever, most truly,
C. Mathews.

The two following letters are agreeable specimens of Mr. Mathews's facetious style, and though containing some matter referred to previously, I will give them entire.

TO J. POOLE, ESQ.

(Globe Insurance Office, Cornhill, London.)

Dear Poole, Stratford-upon-Avon, Dec. 23rd, 1814.

I am too proud to remain in any man's debt, if it is in my power to discharge his lawful demands. You press for a settlement of accounts, and twit me somewhat ungenerously with the length of credit you have given me. I am quite sensible of your indulgence, but must hint to you, that an obligation is considerably lessened when he who has conferred it reminds one of the favour. I am more than alive to the value of the articles with which you supply me, but must remind you that no exact stipulation was entered into as to the time of re-payment. When I received your peremptory letter I was very poor, and could not immediately satisfy your precipitate demands; but your intemperance did not alarm me. I was confident that in your calmer moments you would be convinced of the injustice of your claims. Had I believed that you would act up to your threats, I should have attempted immediately to pacify you; and the consequence would have been, that you would have been paid "by long and miserable instalments." I was determined to wait till circumstances should enable me to pay off the whole of my debt to you. All I shall attempt to say in extenuation is, that numerous other creditors, though they had not heavier, had more immediate claims on me. In my new undertaking I have been compelled to open accounts with dealers in various parts of the kingdom, and to have neglected them would have disabled me from doing that justice to you, which, though tardy in its operations, will, I trust, be ultimately satisfactory. As to Mr. Vansittart, I owe him no justice. I care not one penny for his sufferings; "he has done much harm unto me;" and it is on your account, not his, that I now assist him. Well, then, I owe you two letters? Granted, — you shall have them both; you have waited long enough for them; and, as I say in return, "I wish to continue business with you." I will balance accounts, and you shall have them both at once. No foolscap for me; two honest sheets of thick wove-post. If I had written in immediate reply to yours directed to Salisbury, I could merely have told you, that I left Brighton, after performing my entertainment three times; that I performed that night at Worthing; that I left that place on Tuesday on horseback, which exercise was recommended to me, and I found to agree with me; that I arrived that night at Portsmouth, a distance of thirty-eight miles, horse and man both well; that I slept at the Crown Inn, called at my old friend Mottley's, the bookseller; borrowed of him Lord Nelson's letters to Lady Hamilton, which I read before I went to bed, lamenting sincerely that any circumstance could have arisen to lessen the respect I wished to entertain for the character of the hero of the Nile. I pitied him, despised Lady Hamilton, and went to bed. On Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Monday the 28th, performed at Gosport, to crowded, but by no means elegant, audiences. On Wednesday I left Portsmouth, still on the outside of my horse; I arrived that night at Southampton; I there met my ever-to-be-lamented friend Mr. Wynne, the fiddler with the one optic; I arrived the next night at Salisbury, where I received your pleasant letter. This, and a few items in tavern bills, similar to — Two-pennyworth of whipcord, sixpence; waxlights, two pounds for two hours; three potatoes, 1*s*. Oh, but I forgot, that you have been at Richmond.* Well, then, this is all I could have told you up to that time. Now, how could I have satisfied your unreasonable demands and paid my debts. Two letters at once? I should then have answered all queries,— "What are you about? How do you get on?" in one sheet — I must have said, about as lame as I was on the 1st of November; and in the other, on horseback. Now, see the advantage of a man giving an honest debtor some little indulgence. "Be patient, and I will pay you all." See from whence I write! from the birth-place of the "Sweet Swan of Avon!" Now I am furnished for to write,—such a day had I yesterday! But not a word of it till the next sheet, which, if you open first, you must begin this again, and you may, with Sir Vere Hunt, say, "though this was behind before, yet it is first at last."

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* Where, amongst other exorbitant charges, appeared one shilling for a single biscuit!—A. M.

Well, sir, then I will tell you "what I have been about," and "how I have got on" since I was at Salisbury, where I performed all alone, except that there were crowds to the amount of fifty-three pounds, in the same house with me. They applauded, and I bowed and walked off with the money on Saturday, the 3rd, at seven in the morning. I arrived (hipped as I was,) at Bath that evening, having accomplished forty miles that day. There I had the pleasure, and a great pleasure it was, of meeting a pretty little woman, with whom I fell in love almost twelve years ago, and, strange to say, whom I love as much now as I did then. Pardon my weakness. She met me by appointment; and actually came a hundred and twelve miles to see me. Don't mention this to your mother; she may say it is wrong for a married man to profess love and make appointments with any woman. She may want to know also, who the lady was. I will tell *you, sub rosâ;* it was (turn over) — my wife! Ha! ha! We proceeded next day to Clifton, near Bristol; spent three or four pleasant days at the house of a friend. On Wednesday evening I performed at Bristol, and next night at Bath: good houses. The latter the reverse of Gosport, elegant, but not crowded. Mem. Bath very thin. On Saturday my wife and I — after what I have told you, will you believe it?—my wife and I parted! and I have never seen her since; and what was worse, (no, I don't mean that — but I was very sorry,) my horse and I parted! I had then ninety miles to go to Birmingham in two days, and "the rain it did pour;" and lucky it was that I determined on another mode of travelling, for it has poured ever since I arrived. As letters travel on a Sunday morning, at seven at Birmingham went to bed; slept till two; performed three nights; and stayed one week with the button-makers. On my arrival, by the little daylight I had, perceived—"Damn Elliston!" "Down with the tyrant!" "No Elliston!" &c. on every wall I passed, like "B. C. Y." in London. Can't explain all this—too full of Shakspeare and Warwick Castle. I am afraid Elliston is more likely to suffer from the latter than the former. Foolish fellow! I am sorry for him. Thus endeth the first lesson. I think the first instalment will prove the integrity of the debtor; and if it does not satisfy the creditor, why, curse his hard heart! he must be as unreasonable as a relation of mine, whose tombstone I visited yesterday at Bidford—

> "Here lies the body of John Wilkes, who departed this life August 1800, aged 100 years. Life is *short*, eternity is long."

Yours, my Pooley,
Very truly,
C. Mathews.

TO J. POOLE, ESQ.

Dear Poole, Stratford-upon-Avon, Dec. 23, 1814.

On Saturday evening last I arrived at Warwick. You have heard of Guy? Well, on Sunday morning I inquired the best mode of getting into the castle, and was informed that visiters were not admitted on a Sunday; the order was peremptory, and it would be useless to apply. I asked if the family were there? No. I still determined to make the trial, as I had no other opportunity of seeing it. I therefore presented myself at the great gates, as if ignorant of the prohibition. "'Tis as much as my place is worth," said the porter, "to admit anybody of a Sunday." "Why," replied I, "Lord Brooke told me at all times that I could be admitted. He, I am certain, never mentioned that there was such an order." In short, I bullied my way in, wrote down a feigned name, and, on its being handed to the old Scotch housekeeper, she came, like Mrs. Salmon, to show me the Court of King Solomon. I was most highly gratified. The pictures alone are a feast: some very fine specimens of Titian, Rubens, Guido, Correggio, Teniers, and five of the finest Vandykes I ever beheld. In the same room there are several original portraits by him of Charles I, Henry VIII, Queen Mary, &c. The grand bed is also exhibited in which Queen Anne slept when at the castle. The finest armoury I ever have yet seen is also shown here; but the great surprise—the grand effect, is withheld till the last moment, as you return from the house to the great gates. The porter invites you to view his sacred repository of antique gems. He then exhibits all Guy's armour, his sword, five feet long, his walking-stick, above six feet,—the breastplate for the horse; and, as he was himself eight feet four, of course it was necessary to find a horse of proportionate dimensions, and therefore the breast-plate might conveniently fit a large pet elephant. He then showed us Guy's porridge-pot of bronze, which will contain one hundred and twenty gallons of porridge or punch, and weighs eight hundred weight. This, he gravely told us, the Earl could half empty for his breakfast. The rib of the dun cow is then exhibited, that the Earl slew. This is so enormous, that, after thinking of rhinoceroses and elephants, and all other large animals, I am quite convinced that it must be the bone of a whale. So much for Warwick. On Sunday evening I arrived at the natal town of the "sweetest bard that ever sung," and met immediately with a very scarce article, indeed—an intelligent landlord, who had travelled much, and to good purpose. He has seen all the famous French actors, from Le Kain to Talma, and all the English: is very theatrical—an enthusiast about Shakspeare, and a good linguist; would rather have an actor in his house than a duke: and told me numerous anecdotes of those of our artists who had visited his house. Next morning a fresh adventure arose. I met with a cousin, whom I had never seen, who told me of a great many other cousins whom I had never seen; and on the following morning I took a chaise and went to Bidford, seven miles from hence, where I dined and spent the evening with fourteen first and second cousins! I visited the church-yard, being always an epitaph-hunter; and there I found the names of many uncles, cousins, &c.; one old jockey I mentioned to you in my last, who did not think he had lived long enough, and I suppose wished to begin another century. In this country they invariably say we for us—us for we—she for her—"her tea'd wi' me, and I told she so." A fine specimen of this I found on one of the tomb-stones—

"Whilst in this world us did remain,
Our latter end was grief and pain;
At length the Lord, him thought it best,
To take we to a place of rest."

In Bidford church-yard a man was buried at the age of eighty-nine. One of my cousins is a stone-mason, and distils—grave-stones. It was engraved on the stone by mistake, 84; when it was discovered, previously to its being directed, one of the relations said, "Him was 89, mun. You must *add* five years to it." This conversation took place before my cousin's operator, who actually next morning added a 5 to the original numbers; so it reads—"Here lies John Osborne, who died at the age of 845." I saw the stone, all the letters of which are gilt, excepting the figure 5, of which there is enough remaining to certify the fact to those who had heard the story.

Another accomplishment here is the "*exasperating* the H" (by the bye, you were found out at Brighton). I was referred here to an old alderman, a capital scholar, an adorer of Shakspeare, &c., who told an uncommonly good story. He furnished a fine specimen of the beautiful consistency of their mispronunciation. I can only give you a sketch of a character that I shall relate to you at length, some day, I hope not far distant, with the manner and voice, both excellent. "So, sir, you like Shakspeare?" "*Yease* (yes) ah! hi remember the jubilee—*yease.* The first time I saw little Davy Garrick was in the 'igh-street, *and that.* He was full of the jubilee, and *what not.* He hoccupied a room in my ouse: hi was a bye (boy) then. You a erd of Davy? He had a many dresses from London, and things of that sort. *Yease*, the fire-works was by a hartist from London, *and that.* My father was a halderman, and *that—yease,* and provided a many things for the dinner at the '*All*, and *what not.* He kept the Lion, *and that;* and little Davy, and George, and Peter Garrick, *to be sure*, and Mrs. Doxey, their sister, dined in the "Tempest." What a hi that oman 'ad! Davy's was reckoned a fine high; but, being an oman, perhaps hi looked more at 'ers. And Sam Foote, he took some wine in "Measure for measure,"

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* On our visit to the Brighton Theatre in the autumn there was a lamentable deficiency amongst some of the minor performers of this letter; and Mr. Poole sent some packets of *anonymous h's*, of various sizes, to the destitute, according to the use each might be supposed to have for them.—A. M.

and things o' that sort. You a erd of Foote? *Yease*—he was a *litery* man and famous for your rappartees and *bonn motts*, and *what not.* He followed Davy all round the room at the masquerade, and *what not;* and it rained hall the time 'o the jubilee, and *what not;* and Sam said it was God's revenge against vanity, and *that* —*yease.* How ee did but plague Davy, to be sure, and *what not.* Sam said it was a hinvitation to go post with osses to a borough without representatives,— governed by a mayor and haldermen, who are no magistrates,—to celebrate a great poet, whose hown works a-made 'im himmortal — by a hode without poetry, music without armony, dinners without victuals, and lodgings without beds. *Yease*, but that warnt true, for my father kept the Lion, and what not, and hi took up the first dish, *and that*, to Davy myself, hin "Has you like it;" for ee shifted rooms, and ee ad veal biled in rice; you a' heard o' that dish?— and Vernon, ee was there; *yease*, and ee sung, and *what not—yease.*"

Such a character! — plague on him, he has not left me room to give you an account of my visit to Billy's house, nor to the church. By the by, on the monument I saw the name of Dan Terry, which reminded me of writing to him; therefore, he shall pay for the continuation of these two sheets; and to make your expense lighter, you shall read his letter: say I ordered it, and if he likes, he may read yours. Now have I bestowed all my tediousness, discharged my debts, gratified my pride, and prevented the possibility of your running all over the town, saying I would not write to you. Who is the editor of *The Inquisitor?** They abuse me, I understand, every month; call me execrable mummer, &c., though I am at this distance, and therefore, I should suppose, inoffensive to their eye. There is something more than nature in this. Has Gilliland anything to do with it? Write soon, and be grateful. Direct till the 30th — Theatre, Shrewsbury. Write soon.

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* An insignificant sixpenny publication, with an anonymous editor.—A. M.

Charles Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Stratford-upon-Avon, Dec. 1814.

I did not intend to write to you to-day, as I have so many letters to write, but just as the post is going out I recollect that I am out of snuff, which is a great solace to me when the blue devils come on me; and even good wine is not more difficult to get in "these-um" parts than good snuff. Pray send me by return half a pound of the same sort of snuff that Jones takes; not moistened, but dry; that is, for me to moisten; and if a piece of parchment is to be got in town, tell them to send it to me for that purpose, then they will know it is not to be moistened, but dry. Mind they don't moisten it. I have got a scoop, also, if you can find it; I think, in the upper part of my press in the bedroom. My travelling-cap, send that with the snuff; but mind it is dry snuff; it must not be moistened. Let them both be put up in a parcel and taken to the Swan-with-two-Necks in Lad Lane, and given to the guard of the Birmingham Mail, on Friday morning. Direct it to Wilday's Royal Hotel, Birmingham, where I shall be on Saturday in my way to Shrewsbury. And mind it is *dry* snuff, not *moistened*, because there is no knowing what wet and nastiness they may put to it, and I like to wet it myself, because then I know; so I request it may not be moistened; but mind, *quite* dry.* I was not angry with Susan, nor you either; but I thought it very funny that you should ask me to dinner in London, when you knew I had settled a long tour, that is all.

As to Harris, it was only my horror of another lame part that soured me. However, it is all fixed now, and that I like. Robins has got me leave for another month; and at the end of that time I shall certainly come up, lame or not; and then let them do what they like with me. I have written to Robins to say so, to-day; so now I know what I am about. I am afraid, by your silence about Carpue, that he does not promise much. I 'll write again to-morrow. "A damned good-natured friend" came grinning to me with the Theatrical Inquisitor, where I am called a contemptible mimic. This was the manager. God bless you and dear Charley.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Stratford, Dec. 24th, 1814.

I finished performing here last night. Ha! taken in completely! But I would not have missed my visit here altogether if it had been twice as bad. So I am content. I thought, of course, there was a theatre here, when I was invited to come over. When I came, behold it was a barn! a miserable barn! However, Bannister, Dowton, Incledon, Mrs. Bartley, and others, had acted here, and all for the honour of Shakspeare. So again I was content; and last 1st of December *that ever was*— that darling of Nature, Fancy's child, *Coates*, acted here;

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* These reiterated instructions will remind the reader of the order for the "Grey Cardinal."—A.M.

and was advertised, by his own desire, in the character of *Romeo*, written, as he states in his announcement, "by that immortal bard, Shakspeare, the pride and glory "of Stratford — and not only Stratford, but the British "empire. Mr. Coates will leave London for the express "purpose of gratifying the inhabitants of Stratford, and "in honour of the birth-place of the great poet." After he had acted, he was determined to have a procession all by himself, a minor pageant in imitation of the jubilee; and walked, dressed as *Romeo*, from the barn to the butcher's shop, where Shakspeare was born. Here he wrote his name on the walls, and in the book kept for that purpose, called himself "the illustrator of the poet;" complained of the house; said that it was not good enough for the divine bard to have been born in, and proposed to pull it down at his own expense, and build it up again, so as to appear more worthy of such a being! He went to the church; wrote his name on the monument; and being inspired,—on the tablet, close to the pen in the right hand of the bard, wrote—

His name in ambient air still floats,
And is adored by Robert Coates.

Dowton too, kicked up a great dust in the house where Shakspeare was born. The old woman who shows it remembered him well. He must have been delirious. He desired to be left alone :—"There, go; I cannot have witnesses; I shall cry; and so—eh? What! the divine Billy was born here, eh? The pride of all nature has been in this room! I must kneel! Leave me! I don't like people to see me cry." While alone, I suppose Shakspeare's spirit appeared and inspired him, for he produced the following couplet, which appears on the wall, where there are ten thousand names written, and five hundred, I think, that I know amongst them.

> With sacred awe I gaze these walls around,
> And tread with reverence o'er this hallowed ground.

Bannister, too, went there, after dinner, for the third time in one day; threw himself upon the bed in which the dear lying old woman swears Shakspeare was born, nay, shows the chair he was nursed in. But Jack threw himself in his drunken raptures on the bed, and nearly smothered two children, who were asleep till his raptures awoke them. My own raptures I must reserve for another letter, for about five managers demand a letter each to-day. I have been writing from the moment I got up, which was not very early, for I was roused at half past eight (the middle of the night) by a message from Lord Middleton, whom I do not know, who called on horseback on his way to meet the hounds, to ask me to dinner to-day. He lives at Stratford. I was obliged to send a verbal message to him, and was so savage at being disturbed that I turned round again and slept till eleven. I am just going off to Warwick in a chaise, eight miles, to perform to-night, and return afterwards here, to take the mail to Shrewsbury in the morning, where I hope to arrive to-morrow night at seven. It has been a hurrying day; but as I promised to write, I would not disappoint you. Remember your last was very short, and a little gumpish about Susan, &c. I had not heard from you for five days, remember, and hope you will write by return of post, directed to the Lion, Shrewsbury; and if you have any pleasant news from Carpue, let me have it. Since Garrick and the Jubilee, we actors are held in high esteem here, and I received an invitation to dine with the mayor and corporation at the Town-hall! Give dear Charles a pound-note for me to spend as he pleases on his birth-day. I shall drink his health in a glass of the best red ink; I wish I could drink it in a bottle of my own wine. I shall long to be with you that day.

C. Mathews.

TO G. H. ROBINS, ESQ.

Dear George, Shrewsbury, Dec. 26th, 1814.

If you had written to Warwick you would have had the money to-day. "The post ere his very hawkward," as the Warwickshire people say. I send you 50*l.* My thanks shall be reserved till an opportunity serves; but I hope I may have *one* at least in my life of showing my sense of your very rare and singular kindness and friendship. But enough of this.

Poor Liston! it is very odd that we should be both hipped.* Mahommed will be certain to cure him in three weeks — not sooner. About the 1st of February, I feel great confidence of my being well, but not an hour before; (for I must have my month from this very time, or a manager will go to law with me. On the 23rd of January I must perform at Worcester, and then I fly; but I feel determined to act *Buskin* for my first part at Covent Garden.

If I come near the Whitworth doctors I mean to have a touch at them. I am now scrubbing myself every night by the fire, with a dreadful yellow stink, that I got from a celebrated bone-setter in "thesom peartes," of equal celebrity with the Whitworth doctors; and I am "collectrified every day; so I does not neglect myself, not by no means." I thank God, I never was so free from my horrible hypochondria in my life, nor had I such uniform good spirits as I have had since Thompson's affair and my accident.

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* Mr. Liston had an attack of rheumatism in his hip at this time.—A. M.

If I had not fallen from Tilbury Fort I should have felt his rascality more severely, for I have got more money than I should have got in town.

God bless you, my best of friends. Regards to Mrs. Robins. I fear to ask after your poor brother. If you dare, remember me to him, pray do. Happy new year to you, my old boy. I am glad 1814 is going; he has been a plaguy bad one to me. Ever and ever yours sincerely,

C. Mathews.

CHAPTER XV.

Letters from Mr. Mathews to Mrs. Mathews: borrowing friends; success in the provinces. — *Doctor Pother* in the "Farmer's Wife." — Letter to Mrs. Mathews: the Whitworth Doctors; Mr. Liston and the liniment. —Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Wolverhampton.—Mr. Mathews's visit to Lord Combermere.—A colony of Cousins.—Mr. Mathews's re-appearance at Covent Garden Theatre.— His visit to Brighton. — Letters to Mrs. Mathews: an excursion with Charles; Madame Moreau, and Mrs. Grace; dulness of Brighton.— Mr. Mathews's reading. — His habits of jesting in conversation.

The following letter refers to one of those instances of total want of principle in those he served, from which the writer so often suffered. After borrowing all the money they could, such persons solicited the loan of his name; and, as in the present case, by their want of faith, left him to redeem the pledge and to pay its amount, rather than have his credit impugned. The other part of the letter relates to his yet-existing hope of a cure for his lameness.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Liverpool, January 1815.

Remark is useless. The consistency of my luck with *friends* is delightful. *All* I have accommodated have left me in the lurch. Jack Johnstone right again. "D * * * *," said he, "is a very pleasant fellow, but keep his hands from your pockets." I don't wonder at your anger; perhaps the climax may be providential. I should have been loth to refuse W * * * * and S * * *, but the provocation is now strong. I never will be induced to accept a bill again for any human being.

I took great pains about the recipe, and more trouble and expense, than anything that has yet occurred; but I defy all patients, aided by all the surgeons in England, surgeon-mates in the navy, and all their assistants, to keep anything on the hip-bone. You know what difficulty Andrews and Fisher had, rolling me round with calico with as little mercy as if they had been splicing a mainmast, sewing me up like a cargo for exportation, and how they were puzzled to keep it on above twenty-four hours. In that plaster there is not the slightest adhesive quality; quite the contrary. That which I put on at Bath was between my shoulders when I arrived at Birmingham, after a night's jolting in the mail. A surgeon there charged me one pound for attendance, and rolling and plaster, and before morning it was very near my ear, under my pillow. In short, after various attempts, I did and do pronounce, as it cannot adhere, that it is impossible to keep it on. After the surgeon had pocketed my money, he agreed that no ingenuity could keep anything on the hip-bone: it is a pivot. As to the plaster, I would almost as soon be lame as be annoyed with it: it is as useless, I am persuaded, to "*an Ipp* case," as they call it at Birmingham, as a bit of paper. I now rub every night with a recipe that originally came from the famous Whitworth doctors, and I think it does me good. I am certainly much better.

The new year, in a pecuniary point of view, has commenced auspiciously. Last week was my best week; 90*l.* was the top before. It was above that, and nearer 100*l.* I have no doubt that the ensuing week will be equally good. On Sunday next I go for two days to Lord Combermere's. From thence to Wolverhampton, and I finish at Worcester. This day three-weeks (the 29th) I hope to spend at home, at farthest. I won't describe how pleased I shall be: I hope you can imagine it. I devote this week to Liverpool, where all hands agree in saying that I shall succeed for three nights. Write, write, write.

C. Mathews.

Liverpool, 1815.

I have not had a circumstance to relate since Sunday, or I should have written. This town has turned out most famously; I did not think of performing here more than two nights, and but for the entreaties of Mulock and Ryley I should have been last night at some thirty-pound town, merely because it would have been in my road to Wolverhampton, where I am engaged on Friday the 20th. I had no idea of my performance succeeding anywhere more than two or three nights at most. Mulock said that I should be mad to go, and that he was sure it would answer six nights; advising me to sacrifice all other places to it, on a speculation. I think I told you, that on the first night there was 64*l.* I returned last Monday, and there was 52*l.* in the room. Good! you will say for a second night. Well, last night, for the third time, there was 15*l.* and one hundred tacked to it! above seven hundred people crammed, wedged into the room!—115*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*! what think you of that? Never was such a thing known to a budgeter.

So I at it again to-morrow, and Monday; and though we can't expect anything like either of these houses, (for last night was believed to be conclusive,) yet no doubt it will pay better than any other place. I hope to bring you home 300*l.* clear, including Wolverhampton.

I have another pleasing circumstance to relate. The evening of Tuesday I spent with Dr. P——, and he volunteered an examination, and "durglion pldgf heron gdal — professional capacity; only five months—no time at all—and gdhil mawel doing recovery—nothing to justify despair — and dlghgn Ndoph, walk as well as ever." In short, he does not seem to hesitate in his opinion, that though it may be some time, a perfect recovery may ultimately be effected.*

Mulock desires remembrances; he is very kind and attentive. I have dined with him three times. He says he likes you better than me. He never knew you till the last visit.

Write—write—write! Love to dear Charles.

C. Mathews.

To Mrs. Mathews.

Doctor P—— had been the study from which Mr. Mathews took his portrait of *Doctor Pother,* in the "Farmer's Wife," at Covent Garden Theatre; and so naturally was the unintelligibility of his pronunciation given, that matter-of-fact people did not at first enter into the drollery of the idea, though afterwards they were much amused by it.

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* All this purposed obscurity is descriptive of Dr. P * * *'s peculiarity in speaking, which never had been particularly noticed until pointed out by Mr. Mathews.

On the first night a performer, with much zeal, came running down from the front of the house at the end of the first scene, to conjure him to be more distinct, for that he had not been able to understand one word out of ten which he had uttered. The proverbial quickness of a London audience was never more apparent than in the taking of this character, which, after a few speeches was understood, and enjoyed as much as if all present had known the original from whom it had been copied.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Chester, January 19th, 1815.

I have just arrived here, and to-morrow I go to Combermere. Last night I finished with *eclat*. — " God bless the good people of Liverpool !" — 72*l*. again, last though not least. The Circus, too, full every night. Horses against me, and some very bad weather on two nights. I am just annoyed by hearing that I have not above a quarter of an hour to write, seal, and send this: and almost pity your paying postage for such a letter; but it is necessary that I should send it, to tell you that I have sent from Liverpool to-day a box directed to you, in which you will find a coat, &c. of which I wanted to ease my luggage; and wrapped in the coat, a bottle of invaluable treasure according to report here, and my own experience; for I have no doubt it has done me great good. It is a recipe of the *Whitworth doctors*. Pray insist upon Liston's trying it; I am sure that it will do him good. He must not have it all: it is worth a hat full of guineas. A little will go a great way; about a table-spoonful rubbed every night,—and one in the day, by the fire. It has some of Hollingshead's ingredients in it. It has performed miracles here. Send him a small part, and if it does good he can have more. I am sorry I am obliged to cut so close, and conclude. God bless you and my boy!

C. Mathews.

I must confess that Mr. Mathews was rather credulous about quack medicines; but to those who knew his sufferings, which the profession seemed unable to relieve, it was not to be wondered at that he caught at every promise made by empirics. Of this "invaluable" recipe I insisted, as I had been desired, upon Mr. Liston's making a trial for a rheumatic complaint under which he was suffering; and the next evening I joined him with Mrs. Liston in a box at Drury-lane Theatre. He had tried it: in fact, with some faith, and much flannel, had so appropriated the quantity sent, that in a few moments every creature near us had his handkerchief to his nose; one by one left the box with disgust, and a delicate lady, in that which adjoined ours, fainted. All this time the person who was in such bad odour with all about him was so convulsed with laughter at the remarks made, and the low-toned but audible speculations as to what could occasion anything so shocking, that he was obliged to stifle his risibility with his pocket-handkerchief, occasionally giving me such looks as he alone could give. To be sure it was shockingly offensive; and had

I not been aware of the nature of the nuisance, I should like others have fled from it. As it was, we were sitting as if the plague-spot had been detected upon us,—yet, shamefaced as we all really were at the effects, it was impossible not to be amused by the looks afar-off of those whom Mr. Liston (and the Whitworth doctors) had driven away, and the sudden departure, afterwards, of every fresh comer who had not previously "nosed him in the lobby." From all these Mr. Liston took care to avert his face, and, indeed, at the time, he was not well-known off the stage; so that he was only on this occasion alluded to as "that gentleman," by the few who found out whence the objectionable perfume emanated.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Wolverhampton, Jan. 24, 1815.

I have not above five minutes' notice, and if I had, I have nothing to say. I left this country buried in snow; it has been fine from the hour I left it; and, on my return, I find it in the same state. I shall be very angry if I find you have had fine weather in London. This is the most wretched-looking town in England, and the snow does not improve its appearance; it has never ceased since Thursday.

On Wednesday last I shook hands with a Bishop! I had a curious day at Lord Combermere's. I have not room to tell you all the particulars,—these I shall reserve for fire-side chat. I have a long story also to tell about cousins. They are scattered about in all directions in these counties. I spent a whole day with about fourteen relations, going seven miles to see them.

Charles Manly's brother follows me like a shadow. He has been in five different towns where I have been, staring at me from the pit. I was very near dining with a new one to day, near Stourbridge, but he was from home. There, that is all I can think of, — and so no more. God bless you!

C. Mathews.

I am a little reconciled to the weather now, by hearing of the arrival of the snow in London.

The particulars of the "curious day at Lord Combermere's" were, as nearly as I remember them, as follows.

On his arrival, and before he could be announced, he was greeted by his lordship, at the entrance of the room, who seemed to have been there waiting his appearance, for the purpose of receiving him. "Ah! my dear Major Johnson, I am delighted to see you!" exclaimed Lord Combermere as my husband entered the room, in which several guests were assembled. The new-comer started back in surprise, but, as he felt that Lord Combermere could not be in error, knowing him so perfectly well, he, with much embarrassment, waited for the explanation, which he was assured would soon follow this extraordinary misnomer. Still however, his noble host, addressed him on all occasions as at first; and *Major Johnson* he was considered by the whole party.

It was really a matter of some distress to Mr. Mathews to find himself, by his own tacit admission, an impostor in society; and so naturally did Lord Combermere carry on the deception, that from time to time it was difficult for Mr. Mathews to believe that his lordship was aware he was any other than the person he chose to call him. Dinner was at length announced, and Major Johnson handed one of the ladies down stairs, constrained as he was to humour his noble friend's joke, while it lasted. During dinner, just as he was becoming reconciled to his new name, and relieved from his first embarrassment, one of the party asked "Major Johnson" to take wine with him. At this moment, a gentleman opposite, who had arrived late, looked up in the *Major's* face. Starting with surprise, and evidently knowing who he really was, the new comer looked about at the faces of others, as if to ask, "what does this mean?" The silent question was of course unanswered, except by the blushes of the innocent impostor, who saw that he was known. This gentleman at last addressed him, with great meaning in his looks, and stress upon his name. "Major Johnson, will you allow *me* the honour of a glass of wine with you?" Notwithstanding this, all proceeded as Lord Combermere had determined, and without any further remark from the initiated guest, who contented himself with an occasional arch look at Mr. Mathews. Major

Johnson could not by any endeavour obtain a word apart from the company with Lord Combermere; he was, therefore, compelled to retain the commission bestowed upon him by his noble patron, and retired to rest under the weight of his military honours.

The Bishop of ——— and his lady were also staying at the house. The venerable churchman, who was always most punctilious in giving my husband the full complement of his recently acquired title, asked him several humane questions respecting the nature of his *wounds!* and once, when left alone with Major Johnson, made some observations upon Lord Combermere's imprudent predilection for the canine race, inasmuch as he was in the habit of having dogs always in his sitting-room. The Bishop evidently felt a little timidity in the presence of an immense animal of the Newfoundland breed, then stretched at full length upon the rug, which excluded in some degree those who were not familiar with it from the benefit of the fire. The following story will at once be recognized as one given by my husband in his "Country Cousins," in 1829, in the character of *Doctor Prolix*. The Bishop was slow and sententious in speaking, and his voice rather tremulous: he thus delivered himself.

"Don't you think, Major Johnson, that our friend, Lord Combermere, is ill-advised in thus allowing so tremendous a creature as that to be so familiarly and constantly associated with him?" The Major, who loved dogs too much to agree with the Bishop, was silent; and the Bishop reiterated his own opinion upon the subject. "I say, Major, I think it highly dangerous that so formidable a creature should be admitted to the habit of entering the room at all times and seasons; and this opinion of mine, indeed, applies to all animals; for however tamed for the time and attached these creatures may seem, there *will* come a time when they will be treacherous. The time *will come*, I say, Major, when they will turn round upon their generous protectors—to their confusion and dismay.

"I remember, Major Johnson, when I was a youth at college, that an extraordinary instance of this occurred. A man went about the country exhibiting a lion which he had tamed, as he thought, completely. Well, Major, as I have said, I, with a fellow-student, went to the place appointed to see this enormous animal — a tremendous beast, indeed! Well, Major, the keeper at that time had a practice (a very rash practice) of putting his head into the lion's mouth for the lucre of gain, and while it was there, if the lion did not wag his tail it was well and good; but if he *did* wag his tail, it was *not* well and good, inasmuch as he generally, in that case, bit the keeper's head off. So, as I have said, Major, the keeper put his head into the lion's mouth, and presently a voice, as if from afar off, was heard to cry out three several times the following words—'Doth he wag his tail? Doth he wag his tail? Doth he wag his *tail?*' So, seeing the tail beginning to move, and the lion giving indications that he was about to be unpleasant, I answered, 'Yea, he doth!' 'Doth he, by G!' said the keeper, (with an oath which I will not repeat)—'Doth he, by G! then I am a dead man!' And he would have been if I had not, with great promptitude and infinite presence of mind, taken from my pocket a penknife, wherewith I nibbed my pens, and cut the desperate animal's throat!"

My husband was too orthodox to express a doubt of the personal share the venerable story-teller had in the fact related. On the contrary, he thought him the "best of cut-throats;" and in gratitude gave the public the useful lesson not to cherish an overweening fondness for the brute creation, for which all his hearers were truly grateful.

What Lord Combermere's motive was for thus gratuitously and unexpectedly placing Mr. Mathews upon the Army List, I cannot now relate; unless, knowing the propensity of his visiter, his Lordship had a sudden whim to hoax the hoaxer. Perhaps it was only a desire to amuse himself with my husband's surprise for the time, as the jest was abandoned on the following morning, and Major Johnson resigned his commission in favour of *Mr. Mathews,* who stood honourably forward in his place.

His notice of a colony of cousins I regret to find not followed by the description of them which he gave me, to my great entertainment, upon his return home. His oral account of these simple people convulsed his hearers with laughter. One circumstance which occurred during his visit only I remember.

An old gouty man, the head of the Manlys, to whom Mr. Mathews was presented with great form, (by one of his sons,) welcomed his kinsman with great cordiality, and in the course of the visit asked "What his *calling* might be?" The young man, thinking to impress the elder at once with the consequence of their newly-found relation, replied for the stranger as follows:—"Mr. Mathews is a *great London actor*," but no sensible effect was produced, the gouty man simply answering, "Oh, indeed! Well, but how did ee come to be so lame, poor thing? Oh!" (as if recollecting himself,) "I remember reading of a sad accident about one of your people." "Yes," replied Mr. Mathews, "I was unfortunate, indeed, in meeting with an accident, which I fear will affect me for the rest of my life." "Ah, dear, dear!" said the compassionate old man, "a sad affair, indeed. I remember all about it now. I little thought it happened to one of my own flesh and blood. Ah! and so, poor thing, it was thee, was it, that *tumbled off the rope?*" It scarcely need be explained, that the unsophisticated old man had seen an account of a rope-dancer's accident at Astley's, which was related in the papers about this time.

On the 3rd of February Mr. Mathews returned to his duties at Covent Garden Theatre—his first appearance there since his accident. He was still very lame. As soon as his return was announced the boxes were all taken; and when his voice was first heard from behind the scenes in the character of *Buskin,* in "Killing no Murder," the most universal applause commenced. When he came forward, the plaudits continued for some moments. In short, his re-appearance and performance were distinguished by the most gratifying tokens of regard and approval. Mr. Liston's complaint, also, in the hip, was visible in his deportment; and the brother comedians' mutual congratulation upon their meeting again after so long a separation, from the circumstance of both having been *hipped,* added "to the conviviality of the evening." The house was crowded in every part.

Towards the end of March, Mr. Mathews found rest again indispensable for a short term, and he visited Brighton — always his favourite resort, when circumstance and time would permit of recreation, and consequently took a few days' *pleasuring,* as he called it. He indulged himself still further by taking his boy with him, who manfully accompanied him on his pony, his father performing the journey on horseback.

Brighton, March 19th, 1815.

I have the pleasure to announce to you the safe arrival of myself and our dear little Buck, at three o'clock to-day, in high health and spirits. We got to Box-hill yesterday at five o'clock. About half an hour previously to our arrival I thought I discovered symptoms of fatigue which Charley's pride would not allow him to acknowledge. I sounded him about proceeding a stage further: he said, "Yes, if I liked;" but I saw the head averted to hide a tear which, most unkindly to his manly feelings, endeavoured to obtrude itself. I saw that a little management was necessary with *man* and horse; therefore, I bribed his hunger by a promise of some dinner at Box-hill. His eyes glistened at the anticipation. We arrived, and had some excellent mutton-chops. I cheered his little heart with a glass of wine, and then began to hint at proceeding, which, thanks to my management, I found he was anxious for. I described to him how it would lighten the journey of to-day, so we jogged on, and I secretly determined to go as far as Horsham, thirty-five miles from town, or to go as far as possible as long as all were fresh. We heard from Charman, of a snug little house at Capell, eight miles from Box-hill; therefore I had that in reserve. I found the little Buck in high feather from his "nourishment," and capable of any distance. I got within two miles of Capell, still determining to go to Horsham, if possible, and he consented with alacrity. At that moment, however, a Scotch mist came on, which wet us very fast, and I determined to stop at Capell. He behaved most gallantly, but was evidently rejoiced at our stay.

We "tea'd," and he kept open his eyes with difficulty till half-past eight, when he went to roost. We were up at eight, and anticipated a thorough wet day.

On my arrival, found Mrs. White and all the inmates. Mrs. Grace arrived from France on Sunday morning in an open boat, with two French hair-dressers, a jeweller, a dancer, and Madame Moreau. She had only one shoe on; one stuck in the mud in her *absolute* run from the middle of Dieppe to the place of embarkation. They gave nine guineas for the boat, and were asked twenty. More than two thousand people were waiting at Dieppe for escape. She has only brought a pocket-handkerchief full of linen. Her head was bound up with a coarse check apron, bought at an extravagant price from a French chamber-maid. She was so impressed with the necessity of instant escape, that she did not even think of her luggage, which she says, had she waited for, she is sure she should not have got over at all; and it was only owing to a letter of introduction she had to Madame Moreau, that she could get a place in the boat, and had only five minutes' notice of her departure.

God bless you, my dear Mamma, C. J. Mathews.
Amen, C. Mathews, sen.

Brighton, March 22nd, 1815.

You may imagine, perhaps, that Charles must be dull here, but I assure you it is the reverse. His pony, the sands, the Steyne, his hoop by day; and Miss White throws off half her years for him at night. He is very entertaining to all the party. Walter Scott* has hitherto engrossed all my attention; but tricks on cards, conjurations, puzzles, &c., have kept him in one continual roar of laughter. It does me good to hear him laugh; and though I am occasionally forced, in my own defence, to stuff my fingers in my ears in order to get a clear understanding of the Scotch words, yet I am delighted that my boy seems to be blessed by Providence with a dowry denied to me and all my family, a tranquil mind and a natural cheerfulness. He has not one dull moment here, and it is with difficulty that I can persuade him to go to roost at half past ten.

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* The novels of Sir Walter Scott.

Tell Robins* there are not more than forty-five people in all Brighton, and I can swear to every one of them having been here when I was here before, and that I gave my entertainment three times! I am certain it could not answer. The military are all in London; the Prince's Pavilion emptied even of servants; M. P.'s all on duty. It was my intention to try it; and as a proof of it, though I did not mention it to you, I brought down my music-books, &c. C. MATHEWS.

To Mrs. Mathews, Lisle-street,
Leicester-square.

In the foregoing letter he mentions that he was reading a novel by Walter Scott; for many years previously, however, he never read anything but history, memoirs, &c. In selecting a book for perusal, he always put me in mind of the question which children are apt to ask when listening to any marvellous story, before they express their wonder at the recital—"But is it all *true?*" For many years after I knew him, he never read anything but biography, or subjects of matter of fact. It seemed as if in this he pursued his study of human character in all its varieties. He was no politician; yet he felt an intense interest in the debates of the House of Commons; and allowed neither business nor other occupation to supersede his perusal of every one published. If the day afforded no time, he would steal hours from his sleep to go through the speeches—when he had not heard them on the spot—which he always preferred. I remember, that in Yorkshire, and before his person became known in London,—after which period he had an invincible repugnance to be noticed in public, out of his profession—it was his habit to attend the courts of justice regularly; and he would sometimes appear at the theatre at night without having dined, after great excitement, and so ill from exhaustion, that with difficulty he got through his professional duties. During the assizes in York, Tate Wilkinson found this habit interfere so seriously with the interests of the theatre, that he threatened at last to exact a forfeit from any performer (thus making it a general, rather than a particular threat,) who should attend any criminal trial on a play-day.

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* Mr. Robins had suggested his performing a night in Brighton.—A. M.

The peculiar line of reading in which Mr. Mathews originally took most pleasure, was first broken in upon by his introduction to Mr. Walter Scott, about whose novels he became an enthusiast, never allowing a new production to be published an hour without seeking it; and having obtained the work, he remained absorbed by it till he closed the last volume, when he would exclaim, "I'm miserable! I have finished the book!"

From the period of the publication of the Waverley novels, works of imagination took a higher tone, and he was easily persuaded to peruse those of other gifted authors, so that for the last few years he read with avidity all the best productions of the day in this class.

It was extraordinary that a person so full of imagination, and in youth something of a versifier, did not love poetry,—"Childe Harold" formed the solitary exception. Mr. Mathews was in the habit of saying, among many extravagant things, with a view to enforce his general feeling upon certain points, (which extravagances were set down to him as real opinions by matter-of-fact folks, or by such as might not be good-natured and ingenuous in their construction of his words,) that no person should persuade him into the belief that they had read Milton, adding, "Everybody likes to *say* they have." One day, asserting this with unusual earnestness, I fetched him a MS. book, into which I had some years before made copious extracts from "Paradise Lost." He was "beaten," as he called it; and always afterwards amused himself by observing, at the end of any argument in which he was obliged to yield to my position, "However, you have read Milton through, and Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison, (the only person who ever did,) and so I do not wonder at anything you say or do." He too had read them, but he had a fancy for affecting otherwise, and it proved a very amusing fancy, for it caused him to say many laughable things when denying the fact.

It was his habit in these playful moods, in certain cases, to exaggerate his actual feelings and opinions in order to impress them the more forcibly upon those with whom he talked. On this principle, not being fond of the sport, and observing the general want of success in it, he affected to believe that no man ever caught fish with a line. He teazed Irish Johnstone excessively, and some matter-of-fact men of his acquaintance, who were great lovers of angling, by invariably declining to join their party on their fishing expeditions; and when they boasted, and even displayed the results of their sport, he would say, he had no doubt they *caught* them in a *net*, but not with a line: once, however, the weather being very fine, he suffered one of these *Piscators* to hook him into a fishing excursion with a party of anglers, who promised to bring him home a convert to their sport. Thus he was netted, and he did not hope to find a mesh wide enough for his opinion to creep out at.

Nevertheless, he had promised, and was obliged to go.

Oddly enough, the day proving unfavourable, not a fish was caught! At this my husband chuckled secretly, as may be supposed; but when the party expressed their vexation, that on *this* day above all others they should be unsuccessful, (and Irish Johnstone was provoked beyond all description at such ill-luck), Mr. Mathews affected, in a cool sceptical tone, to regret that they should so carry on the farce, assuring them that he had gone with them reluctantly, because, as he was certain they could not convince him by proof, he was unwilling to expose them to the mortifying necessity of confessing the fact, that fish were never to be caught with a line. He was sorry, but they *would* take him with them. They were all wet through, and for his own part, he thought that the sooner the foolish business was forgotten the better. Thus they returned to town, the fishermen persisting that it was their only case of failure, while their provoking and incredulous friend, much amused, affected an indulgent feeling for them, and smiled and wondered at their persisting in what was clearly a fallacy. At their next meeting in the green-room, their brethren (who had been told of the proselyte that was to be made) pressed to know whether the party had caught anything. Mr. Mathews replied, "Oh, yes! all I expected to catch. It poured with rain the whole day, and we all caught *colds*."

Most of this party believed implicitly, that when he uttered these absurdities, my husband asserted his real opinion about fishing, and he never undeceived them; but steadily declined their subsequent invitations, receiving, however, their presents of fish, accompanied almost by affidavits as to the manner in which they had been caught.

His dependence upon the common sense of those with whom he conversed often led to the most ridiculous conclusions on their part. *Par exemple:*—A Mr. Coram, a print-collector, whom Mr. Mathews employed to seek scarce prints for him, was remarking to him one morning that it was surprising how Garrick managed to have so many likenesses of himself painted, considering the great occupation of his time in other matters. To this Mr. Mathews carelessly observed, "Oh, Garrick sat for his picture every Monday morning of his life!"—"Really!" said Mr. Coram, in a tone of perfect reliance on this assertion. Mr. Mathews smiled, but said nothing further.

A few mornings afterwards, old Mr. De Wilde, the theatrical portrait painter, called on him, and in the course of conversation told him that he knew a man who, he was sure, would be an invaluable resource to Mr. Mathews in any difficulty or obscurity that might arise during the

Theatrical Biography he was then forming, as this person possessed a fund of dramatic lore. Of this he instanced "a *curious* little anecdote" which Mr. Coram had that very morning told him, and which he (Mr. de Wilde) "really thought Mr. Mathews ought to know, namely, that Mr. Garrick, who was very methodical in the disposal of his time, had set apart *two hours* of every Monday morning during his life, for the purpose of sitting to some artist, — hence the vast number of portraits of him extant!"

Jesting with the uninitiated is sometimes a perilous habit, especially if it be practised in any conventional language; quotations too, are very hazardous with the unread. I remember once staying in a country mansion, with a good-humoured, laughing, fat, young woman, who speedily became very sociable with my husband, and on taking leave of him one night with more than usual cordiality, Mr. Mathews gaily adopted the phrase of the *Friends*, in Mr. Canning's "Rovers," and exclaimed, "Good night, my slight acquaintance!" The lady thinking this a slur upon her corpulency, went into hysterics, and afterwards sent her brother to demand an apology for the insult! On another occasion, he was sitting at the breakfast-table in a friend's house, at which the mother of the gentleman presided, and remarking upon the violence of the weather on the preceding night, Mr. Mathews added, from

Macbeth, " Where *I* slept the chimneys were blown down!" This so alarmed the old lady, that she rose from her seat with great trepidation, exclaiming, " Good God! why did you not mention it before?" and ran out, in order to ascertain the extent of the damage done to her state bedroom.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Mathews's return to town, and appearance in the character of *Falstaff*.—His performance of *Macheath* for his benefit.—Mr. G. Colman's Letter to Mr. Mathews relative to an engagement at the Haymarket Theatre.—Mr. Mathews as *Clod* and *Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm*.—Letter of Mrs. Mountain to Mr. Mathews, on her retiring from the stage.—Whimsical mistake.—Lord Tamworth.—Result of a Greenwich dinner. A moral lesson.—Dinner at Long's with Mr. Walter Scott and Lord Byron.—Mr. Mathews leaves town with Mr. Walter Scott.—The "Man on the Great Horse," a startling incident of the road.—Letters of Mr. Mathews from Northampton.—Account of his performance there.—Mr. Mathews visits Warwick Castle and Kenilworth with Mr. Walter Scott.—Indiscreet disclosure of the authorship of the Waverley novels.—Letter from Mr. Mathews from Staffordshire; great theatrical exertion; curious epitaphs.—Letter from Mr. Mathews from Derbyshire.—Invitation of Mr. Mathews to Windsor Castle by Queen Charlotte.—The Irish Mathews and his wife.

On his return to town from Brighton, on the 28th of March, Mr. Mathews performed *Falstaff* for the first time at Covent Garden. The critics agreed upon his performance, and the following notice may serve as an indication of the general opinion.

The play of Henry IV. at Covent Garden Theatre last evening, attracted an elegant auditory to witness Mr. Mathews's representation of *Falstaff.* Although since the days of Henderson, with whom this character was a *chef-d'œuvre*, it has been but inadequately supported, yet many performers have personated the humorous fat knight with no small share of ability. In entering the lists against such competitors, Mr. Mathews had not an easy task; he however, came off victorious. His conception of the part seems entirely his own. In many instances, he was indeed excellent, and afforded some of the best specimens of humorous acting we have for a long time witnessed. On the whole, his performance was very effective, and highly creditable to his judgment.

In the course of the season, some new pieces written for his versatile powers were brought forward with temporary success. Several of them were indebted for this result principally to his representation of the parts assigned to him.

On his benefit night he attracted a crowded house, by his performance of *Macheath* in the "Beggars' Opera," in professed imitation of Mr. Incledon, and the piece was dressed in the original costume of the day in which it was written. Miss Stephens was the *Polly*, and she was so struck at times with the similitude of the present hero to him with whom she had so often performed in the same opera, that sometimes she found it difficult to retain the characteristic earnestness of Polly, and never suffered her eyes to look upon *Macheath* while she was singing. It had altogether a very amusing effect, and was very successful throughout.

4, Melina-place, Westminster-road,
My dear Mathews, 7th April, 1815.

I lament to find that you meditate a jolting journey, which will consign you to the mail, when you dread the motion of a hackney coach to convey you half a mile beyond Westminster Bridge. I have communicated your return from Brighton to my partners, and, as in duty bound, now convey their sentiments to you, but as they agree, I shall embody them with my own, and write as from myself.

The Haymarket Theatre *can not* afford you more money, but it first started you in London, has been an old customer to you, and dealt for your talents in the gross; and much might be argued against its suffering through country purchases of your present popularity by retail,—a retail scooped out of our wholesale engagement. You were unable to fulfil one of these rural *spirting* bargains last year, of course; the provincial manager did not give you a shilling, but the Haymarket did, and with a shrunk treasury, through the unfortunate accident which rendered you incapable of performing a part of your compact. You know me, I think, too well, to attribute my mentioning this circumstance in any spirit of illiberal recurrence. I had much rather recur to your great bodily exertions, which your zeal induced you to suffer, under great bodily pain; but it falls in my way, as general pleading of wholesale trading, versus chandlery.

'Tis true, as you observe, that this is your day; but the individual attraction of an individual actor generally declines faster than his talents. Novelty ceases to be novel upon repetition, and days have their end. Now, when your day in the country may be over, and you may be every whit as good an actor as you are at this instant, you would think it hard if the Haymarket Theatre said, "Your salary must be lowered, because you can get nothing worth going out of town for in the summer." Yet this language would have the same basis of argument as your own; would be precisely your own principle in *an inverse ratio*. Consider this, and much more, which the above sketch of my motives may suggest to you, and then act according to your own feelings.

Should they decide you to be a week from the Haymarket during its season, (which may probably consist of no more than seven weeks altogether!) I do beg and entreat you that this said week may be our commencing, *our very first* week—for, when you once begin with me, your going would be destruction. Surely you can arrange to get away a week before Covent Garden closes, whether the Haymarket should open before that time or not. This would much assist my little scheme. Think for me, and do your best;—or, shall I call on you on Wednesday next? I cannot sooner. Remember, I consider you as engaged to me.

Yours most truly,

G. Colman.

To Charles Mathews, Esq.

I do not recollect in what manner Mr. Mathews decided, but I am sure it was on the side of *feeling* as well as justice. He was at the Haymarket certainly the next season, and on the night of his benefit entertained his friends with a singular performance, well described in the following criticism.

The comedy of "The Quaker" (in which Mr. Mathews appeared as *Clod*,) was succeeded by the first act of Macklin's "Love à la Mode." In this Mr. Mathews personated *Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm*, in the style of the late Mr. Cooke. An ancient orator, whose name we do not immediately recollect, was designated, on account of his close imitations of his contemporaries, *simia sui temporis;* and Mr. Mathews, independently of his original talents, deserves similar praise. His *Sir Archy* reminded us most forcibly of Mr. Cooke. The accent, action, and attitude, were those of his great prototype; but the victory of mind over matter was not so complete as to make us forget the countenance. The amusements concluded with the farce of "Dead Alive!" in which Mr. Mathews, as *Motley*, kept the audience in high glee.

Perhaps in the above notice it would have been better had the critic written *features*, for it was most remarkable how much of *countenance* it was in my husband's power to assume, in whatever imitation he gave; and his power was never more remarkable than when he represented Mr. Cooke.

It will appear by the following letter that Mr. Mathews and Mrs. Mountain met once more in public, and that the mistake of that charming songstress and clever woman in 1812, was no interruption to their friendly feeling.

My dear Sir,

It is certain, that the manner of conferring an obligation very much enhances its value; and if anything *could* add to the high respect I entertain for your talent, it is the kindness with which you have bestowed your exertions on my benefit night. The awful ceremony of bidding farewell to the public, witnessed by a few warm hearts which beat with friendly sympathy towards a retiring performer, favoured by many years of approbation and social intercourse, is a painful feeling, under the most advantageous circumstances.

Mine has been impelled by a succession of events of so dark a complexion, that those acts of kindness which accompany my *adieu* stand forward like brilliant spots upon the surface, and must ever meet "my mind's eye, Horatio," with delight. To you, my dear sir, I am indebted for one of those pleasurable sensations which compensate for "a thousand ills." Accept my best thanks, and with them wishes proportionate to your worth; and do me the favour to believe that I must ever remain, dear sir, your obliged ROSE MOUNTAIN.

Mr. Mathews had a great horror of a crowd, however genteel a one it might be. A large evening party was his particular abhorrence; and whenever we dined at any house, and heard, during the dessert, the street-door intimation that the hostess "saw company" in the evening, Mr. Mathews would give me a look almost of *anguish*. When obliged to appear in the drawing-room, he would do so in the most quiet manner, and then place himself as much as possible out of general observation. A curious circumstance happened one evening about this time, in an insufferably crowded room. We were sitting behind a door upon one large chair, (the only one vacant,) his lameness requiring rest, and his gallantry not choosing to allow me to stand: we were waiting for an opportunity to escape without chance of arrest by the lady of the house, when a servant out of livery presented some ices. My husband took one, and the man passed on. Mr. Mathews, finding himself refreshed by this, beckoned another man, who seemed in attendance, gave him the empty glass, and told him to fetch another ice. In due time the man returned, smiling and bowing as he presented the ice, and remained in waiting to take away the glass, which was given to him, and he again disappeared. Presently he returned to the spot where Mr. Mathews had first seen him; and shortly afterwards a gentleman whom we knew went up to him, and entered into familiar chat, as it seemed. Suddenly we saw our attendant take an opera hat (the fashion of that day) off a chair near him, and walk away arm-in-arm with his friend, for such he proved. In short, our supposed *servant out of livery* turned out to be Lord Tamworth, who saw through my husband's mistake, and good-naturedly humoured it.

I have sometimes thought that there is more propriety and meaning in costly apparel in the upper ranks than most people suppose; and that a gold-brocaded waistcoat upon a man of title or fashion carries a moral with it; for, being too expensive to be purchased by a poor man, and too splendid in its effect to be tolerated in common life, the wearer must either have palpably a right to such a distinction, or suffer under the ridicule of aping his betters. Thus, the necessity of looking different from his superior precludes the temptation of imitating his habits of life.

During this summer "The Chip of the Old Block," written by his friend and brother actor, (and successor in York,) Mr. Knight, ("Little Knight,") and adapted to what was a most delightful portion of his acting — namely, a half-tipsy droll*—was performed. Mr. Mathews was peculiarly happy in this style of character, and those who have seen his *Caleb Pipkin*, in the "May Queen," (one of the same class,) and the gentleman-*tipsiness* of his "*Bashful Man*," will allow that in every representation of inebriety he was perfect. Indeed, it was strange how completely he entered into every mood in which intoxication is to be found, certainly without any experience in his own person; for he never could endure the contemplation of it in reality with any good humour.

His disgust of a drunken man was almost feminine; and any one who drank to excess habitually he never thoroughly esteemed, however worthy in other respects the person might seem to be. A very young man whom he knew had the unfortunate propensity of daily taking more wine than his brain could bear. Upon one occasion, after a Greenwich dinner, this person behaved so obstreperously in the carriage as the party returned to town, that he exceedingly annoyed his friends, and even gave them blows. Mr. Mathews, who was present, enlisted the other gentlemen in the coach in a plot to shame, if possible, the youthful offender out of this dreadful habit. It was agreed that he should be told the next morning that he had, during his over-night's paroxysm, beaten and injured my husband severely in the coach. Consequently, as soon as he heard this, the young man announced himself before Mr. Mathews was out of bed, who, upon hearing who his visiter was, got up and prepared himself in a manner that was quite extraordinary in so short a time, telling me not to seem surprised at what he would explain at leisure. He entered the room, where the abashed visiter was in waiting to apologise for his behaviour, and the injuries he had inflicted. When he beheld my husband, he started back, as well he might, and almost groaned, so shocked was he at the dreadful state in which his friend appeared. Mr. Mathews had coloured his face as if bruised; but the additional expression of suffering which he contrived to throw into it was wonderful even to *me*, who was in the secret. Poor —— absolutely shed tears, walked about the room in all the agony of shame and remorse, declared he would never more exceed a reasonable quantity of the exasperating liquor, and retired a perfect penitent. Whether the amendment lasted, I am not aware; but it is certain that for a time this lesson had its effect upon him, and he was never undeceived. This was as fine a piece of my husband's acting as ever the public witnessed, and I regretted that it was confined to so small an audience. Poor —— went from London soon after, and we lost sight of him; but I have often reflected with confidence that this kindly-intentioned act of my husband might have saved him from destruction.

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* In this piece his celebrated "Nightingale Club," written for him by Mr. Colman, was first sung.

On the morning of the 13th of September, Mr. Walter Scott called in Lisle-street, to invite Mr. Mathews to an early dinner with him, to meet Lord Byron, at Long's Hotel. My husband had left home early on business previously to a journey he was about to make, and I told Mr. Scott that he was on the point of setting off that afternoon for Warwickshire, and that his place in the coach was taken. Mr. Scott expressed his vexation on a double account, first, that he could not see Mr. Mathews at dinner; next, that he had not been earlier aware of his intended journey, for that he had long wished to visit Kenilworth, and should have felt additional pleasure in doing so in his company. Mr. Scott asked me whether I thought my husband would forfeit his place in the coach, on condition that he left town with him in the evening, to post into Warwickshire. I ventured to promise that he would, and after turning over a portfolio of engravings, and chatting over them for about half an hour, the charming man reminded me of his expectation of seeing my husband at the appointed dinner-hour, which, for some reason I now forget, was, I think, three o'clock. Just as Mr. Scott prepared to take his leave, I observed that it was pouring with rain, and that it was impossible he could go away without a coach. He smiled, and refused my offer of sending for one. I then pressed him to take an umbrella; but he declared he never considered any sort of weather an impediment to his moving about free from encumbrance of any kind. He was dressed oddly enough for London, in a dark green coatee, single-breasted, and fashioned, I thought, something like a Squire's hunting-jacket. His nether garments were drab-coloured, with continuations down to his shoes. Without further delay he departed, in the midst of what appeared to me little less than a torrent of rain, through which, leaning on a stout stick, he leisurely walked. As I stood at the window gazing after him as he proceeded down Leicester-place, he looked back with one of his fascinating smiles, and with a playful nod of his head, as if to reassure me that he was doing what was agreeable to him. I thought of the "Scotch mist," and tried to reconcile myself to the complete wet-ting which this pattern-Scott must have received long before he reached Bond-street.

When my husband returned, I need not say that he was charmed with the arrangement I had made for him. He had never seen Lord Byron, and the combined delight of meeting him in company with another great and remarkable man was such as, in hackneyed phrase, may be "better conceived than described." At a little before three o'clock, my husband took leave of me, proceeded to Long's, and after dinner started thence, with Mr. Walter Scott, and, I think, a nephew of his, also a Mr. Scott. On the third morning I received the following hurried despatch reporting progress.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Friday Morning, 10 o'clock, Sept. 15th, 1815.

I am now breakfasting at Stoney Stratford. The man on the great horse arrived about six months back, after a tedious journey. I write to remind you to go to Covent Garden treasury for my salary, or they will forget to pay me, as of course I don't receive any after I quit. Delightful journey, — Scott delicious. Introduced yesterday to Lord Byron at dinner.—Handsomest man I ever saw. Send the enclosed slip to Poole, directed to 36, Norfolk-street. God bless you.

C. Mathews.

The allusion to the "Man on the Great Horse," refers to an incident half serious, half comic, which some years before occurred to us in one of our midnight drives to the cottage already mentioned, at Colney-Hatch. As we slowly ascended Highgate Hill, a man upon one of the largest horses ever seen since the "Bishop's breed," intercepted our progress with an evident intention of robbing us. He surveyed my husband as if measuring the probable chances of repulse and defence. Upon Mr. Mathews demanding his business, the man continued to look curiously into the headed chaise in which we were seated, with an intention, as we supposed, first to ascertain whether there was anything like fire-arms, next, whether he had more than one man to contend with. At this moment Mr. Decamp, who lived on Finchley Common, overtook us, and seeing the design of the stranger, called out, "Mathews, I 've pistols, if you have not!" upon hearing which, the man on the "great horse" removed his position from our horse's head, and falteringly inquired, "Pray, gentlemen, is this the road to Stoney Stratford?" This question caused a simultaneous laugh from the parties questioned; and the traveller was left to glean his information from the next sign-post on his road.

Of the dinner at Long's my husband ever after spoke with delight. Lord Byron was most fascinating; and this last meeting (as it proved) between these two splendid men, to which he was thus admitted, was always a subject of deep though melancholy gratification to him.

With regard to Lord Byron's features, Mr. Mathews observed, that he was the only man he ever contemplated, to whom he felt disposed to apply the word *beautiful.*

Sir Walter Scott has left a record, in his own writing, of this remarkable day,* in the following form:

> I saw Byron for the last time in 1815, after I returned from France. He dined, or lunched with me at Long's in Bond-street. I never saw him so full of gaiety and good humour; to which the presence of Mr. Mathews, the comedian, added not a little.

Upon which, Mr. Lockhart remarks: "the only survivor (Mr. Scott) of the party, has recorded it in his note-book as the most interesting day he ever spent."

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Northampton, Tuesday, Sept. 19th, 1815.

I arrived safe and well at Leamington, on Friday, and when I saw the handful of houses that compose the town, I felt that Mr. Ling had hoaxed me, and much did I repent that I was advertised,—the anticipation was horrid; and no musician could I get far or near till seven o'clock, when one wretched country-dance fiddler arrived from a distance of five miles. I soon found that he could not play a note. I began my performance with an apology, stating that I had written forward to request that all the musicians in the town might be engaged, and that request had been complied with. "Ladies and gentlemen," said I, strictly *all* that are to be found are now in the orchestra: *he* is all. I hope, however, that the defects of the singer may be compensated by the ability of the musician, and *vice versâ;* and if the kindness of the audience will but keep pace with our anxiety to please, my friend and I cannot fail of success." This produced a great laugh, and when we came to the first song, he in vain attempted to scratch a note or two, and he literally was not heard during the whole evening, except between the two acts, when, to rescue his fame, he boldly struck up a country-dance, which he rasped away to the no small amusement of the audience.

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* See "The Scotsman," 1830; and recently, Mr. Lockhart's interesting Life of his illustrious father-in-law.—A. M.

I had all the visiters, I believe, in the place; and, to my amazement, they produced me 27*l*. We* had the next day a most delightful treat, going all over Warwick Castle with Walter Scott. There, by accident, I met Mr. Hall, whom you may recollect at Perry's and Hill's, who was overjoyed at the luck of being introduced to Scotland's Bard. He also was journeying northward. We went on to the celebrated ruins of Kenilworth, where we all dined; and I returned to Leamington. Mr. Hall took the third of a chaise with Simpson and myself on towards Derby, highly delighted at meeting with such post-chaise companions. On Sunday we had a charming journey of thirty miles to this place. I last night played *Buskin*, *Cypher*, and *Somno*, — the house crammed, — holds fifty, and we had fifty-six and a clear half, and expect as good to-night. At present, therefore, all is propitious, and it had need to be, for the misery I endured at rehearsal yesterday, and last night, oh ! such pumps. To-night I do the Entertainment, — such velvet after acting with them ! To-morrow, Coventry.

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* Himself and a friend, who acted at the time as his travelling assistant.

C. Mathews.

On my husband's return home he described to me and others the effect Kenilworth produced upon Mr. Scott, whose delight and enthusiasm led him to make several remarkable observations while surveying these splendid ruins, all which were indelibly impressed upon Mr. Mathews's memory ; and if any evidence was then necessary to prove who the *Great Unknown* was, the fact of those very phrases, and the precise quotations appearing in the Romance when it was published, was enough to settle the point with those to whom they had been repeated.

But previously to this an accidental disclosure had taken place at our own table, which established indisputably the fact of Mr. Scott being the author of the novels ; but of which we were bound in honour, although not by any compact, to conceal our knowledge for some time.

One day, Messrs. John Ballantyne, Constable, and Terry, were dining with us, and during the dinner the Waverley novels had been the theme of conversation. Mr. John Ballantyne had an indiscreet vivacity sometimes, and moreover at this period felt a more than ordinary exhilaration from the "generous" and truth-telling wine, which prompted him to say, at the close of a speech he had made about some books for which I asked him, "I shall soon send you *Scott's new novel!*" I shall never forget the consternation of the Messrs. Constable and Terry, and, indeed, we were as much embarrassed. Mr. Constable looked daggers,—and Terry used some,—for with a stern brow and a correcting tone, he cried out *John!* adding with a growl, resembling what is generally made to check or reprove a mischievous dog,—"Ah! what are you about?" which made us drop our eyes in pain for the indiscreet tattler; while *Wee Johnny* looked like an impersonation of *Fear*,—startled "at the sound himself had made." Not another word was said; but our little good-natured friend's lapse was sacred with us, and the secret was never divulged while it was important to preserve it.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Stone, Staffordshire, Sept. 25th, 1815.

We have just arrived, after a delightful drive from Birmingham, forty miles, on our road to Manchester, where I am to give my Entertainments on Monday night. Our mode of travelling is most delightful; and we have not had one shower since we started from London. I have fagged very hard: have played already six nights, and shall play again six nights next week. Was on the stage at Northampton at half-past eleven o'clock on Tuesday; up at half-past five, Wednesday; went thirty-five miles to Coventry, and played that night. Found on my arrival a hall empty ; not a seat, not a chandelier—no musicians—*no nothing;* and at a quarter before five I had not a prospect of being able to open. I went through every street of Coventry—to the mayor, to an alderman (for "Crazy"[*] was not to be found)—to carpenters, fiddlers; but, however, I mean to publish a small pamphlet with "More Miseries;" and that day's adventures will beat Beresford and Carr hollow. You can have no notion of my temper, my coolness, my perseverance ; Simpson was astonished—hobbler as I am, I knocked him up : he could not follow me. At half-past seven, I had a very elegant audience, all seated on about thirty long forms, dragged from a church ; sixty candles in two chandeliers, dragged from the town-hall, a raised stage, branches, three music-stands, and three bad fiddlers, who could not play "God save the King" between them.[*] It was magic; and all went off well. Lots of "more miseries" on my arrival at Birmingham. Elliston, who left me on Thursday to go down, acted at Covent Garden on Friday, and only arrived yesterday. Such confusion, such madness, such misery ; I was outrageous at him : but here again we got through. I concluded last night in "The Sleep Walker," with three cheers, and the little merry rascal supped with me, and my anger vanished. Would you believe it, I was not advertised till Wednesday, at ten o'clock, to perform that night. My tour is now regularly arranged. Wednesday, Sheffield ; Thursday, Derby ; Friday and Saturday, Leicester, with Macready ; Sunday, I start for home. Pray, write me a letter by return. Direct it—Mr. Drewry, Printer, Derby. Don't fail, for it is a great delight to see your handwriting outside a letter, when I am full of puckers. God bless you and my dear boy! I am full of rude health and in excellent spirits. I am improved a month in my lameness since I left you, and always turn my toe in when I think of you, which I assure you is very, very often. Adieu!

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[*] The name of a superannuated member of the corporation, in O'Keeffe's farce of "Peeping Tom."—A. M.

[†] In other words, the simplest air.—A. M.

C. Mathews.

Epitaphs found to-day at Pankridge:—

Here lies a virgin pure,
Eat up with grief and fleas,
Unto a place of rest,
For her relief.
(*Literatim et verbatim.*)

A mild and dutiful son his here,
Likewise 2 tender infants dear;
So loving and obedient were
The children who lies reposing here.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Ashborn, Derbyshire, Sept. 29th, 1815.

Here we are, after a most delicious journey, through a most fertile and romantic country, from Manchester through Buxton, to this place; forty-four miles from the former, which we left this morning at seven. I have one unexpected non-play night, which is almost the only chance I have of snatching an hour to tell you of my progress. I hope you will do me the justice to believe that I am never disposed to neglect an opportunity of writing to you. The fag I have had on this expedition is not to be imagined. However, I am still, like Wilson the pedestrian, in excellent strength, and confident of completing my undertaking. On my return, I can say that I have played eleven nights, and travelled nearly five hundred miles, in a fortnight. You and I agreed, you will remember, that 200*l.* (considering the hurry and want of organization of my scheme,) would be a good sum to bring home, remembering the extra expense of Simpson's journeys to and from Northampton, my posting to Leamington, &c. Up to this morning, putting all down, I clear 225*l.*! and have yet Derby to-morrow, and two nights at Leicester (but there I only share with Macready); so I think that I have done nobly.

The weather, which has been so propitious during our travelling here, was most unfortunate for my benefit night at Birmingham, and Manchester last night, raining torrents. Last night it hurt me much. I could not resist relating to you what I consider, under all circumstances, "Prodigious!" I direct this to town, to request that you will write, to inform me of the play on Monday, and if they act on Tuesday, and what. If I play on Monday, I can be there easily in time; but would prefer, for the horse's sake, to reach town on Tuesday morning; however, as my furlough expires on Saturday, I must expect to act on Monday.

Charles Mathews.

Mrs. Mathews, Lisle-street,
Leicester-square.

In November, another command from Her Majesty, to perform to her at Windsor Castle, most graciously worded, reached Mr. Mathews, who again was unable to attend the summons, made through Lieutenant-Colonel Stephenson.

At the beginning of 1816, the following paragraph, with its good-natured comment, appeared in the newspapers.

London, Feb. 21st, 1816.

A Mr. and Mrs. Mathews have been for some time making a tour of the theatres in the south and south-west of England. In their late visit to Portsmouth the gentleman went on board a ship, where he sung several comic songs, for which he was rewarded by the crew with a shilling a head.

From a similarity of name, and the addition of "comedian" annexed to it, an idea has gone abroad that the person alluded to is Mr. Mathews of Covent Garden Theatre. In justice to that respectable gentleman, and also to Mrs. Mathews, who has long since retired from the stage, we feel it to be an act of duty to correct this mistake, and to assure the public, that the itinerant comedian of the south is not their old favourite of the London boards.

The above announcement was but a prelude to a long series of annoyances which he received from these persons, as will hereafter appear.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Mathews in Edinburgh.—Success of his Mawworm sermon there.—Letter to Mrs. Mathews relative to a theatrical engagement in Ireland.—Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Clifton.—Travelling in Ireland.—An Irish Highwayman.—An Irish Hostess and her Confessor.—Irish beggars; their importunity and humour.—Mr. Mathews released from his engagement with Mr. Harris.—Theatrical tour in the provinces.—Success of his acting in "Killing no Murder."—Letter from Mr. Colman to Mr. Mathews.—Fatigues of an Actor's life.—Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Chester.—Mr. Kemble's last appearance on the stage.—Public dinner given to him.

In the April of this year (1816) Mr. Mathews made engagements in Edinburgh and Ireland, by permission of Mr. Harris, during the period when a run of certain pieces in which my husband did not perform, rendered his absence allowable.

Edinburgh, April 13th, 1816.

Were it not that my last letter was likely to calm your mind, and to give you two or three days of quiet after your anxiety, I do much repent me that I wrote it; for, after all, I think it quite impossible that I should go to Ireland. So many have been the impediments, that I can reconcile it to my mind as quietly as any circumstance of good fortune, for it appears to me to be a sort of mysterious interference of Providence that I should not go. I have not time to enter into particulars, for they would fill three sheets, and I must write to-day five or six letters.

I am prevented by a visitation, unforeseen and irresistible, from going as proposed. On Friday, at York, it was a warm spring day; at night, in the coach, too warm to bear extra clothing: this continued till Saturday night at Berwick. I slept all the way thence till we approached Edinburgh, when I awoke chilled, and saw snow all around me. On Monday morning I got up with a hoarseness, rheumatic head-ache, and sore throat. I roused—acted *only Goldfinch* and *Buskin*—three songs, all encored. This, of course, confirmed the hoarseness; next night, *Rover*, &c. Wednesday morning, worse—Dr. Bell, medicines, gargles—got through again—apology for encores—dead hoarse; last night, tried again. At last my doctor said, that if I acted again I should confirm my hoarseness, perhaps for ever. I have now given in, and the theatre is closed. I should not have told you this, if I were not able to do so in the highest spirits, (under such a misfortune,) and you might have heard it from newspapers. I give you my word of honour that I am as well to-day as ever I was in my life, as to health. All symptoms of cold and fever have entirely vanished, thanks to Bell, water-gruel, no wine, broths, &c. I only want rest, which I shall now have, till Wednesday, four days; and the Dublin engagement being off my mind, I shall play an additional night or two here, take probably two or three nights at Newcastle, and get well. I go to-day, by the advice of my doctor, to stay till Monday at Constable's house, with Godwin, from London, where I shall have every comfort.

The weather here is so dreadful, that even the natives cannot stand it, and you may guess how bad it is to give me cold. Half the theatre are sick; the wind has been in the east ever since we came; the sun has not peeped forth; it has been snowing or raining all the time, and the city has been enveloped in fog; yet I am in particularly high spirits, for I really had made up my mind that a serious illness was coming on me; and had I not been an actor, I have no doubt I should now have been in bed.

C. MATHEWS.

Mrs. Mathews, Lisle-street,
Leicester-square.

It would appear, by the following remarks, which were published at the time, that *Mawworm* and his sermon were as fully appreciated in Edinburgh as in London and Liverpool.

Mathews's laughter-provoking talents have attracted full houses every evening of his appearance. His acting is of that peculiar kind which frequently excites the highest admiration with the critical observer without the appearance of attempting it; but the common spectator, on these occasions, would be ready to exclaim, with honest *Partridge*, that "he could act as well as that fellow himself."

This observation does not, however, extend to his singing, or to his powers of mimicry. Here his talents are of that rich and unique description which must delight all classes of auditors, and provoke to an equal excess the tittering, fan-tapping applause of the elegant boxes, the walking-stick thumps of the critical pit, and the hearty ha-ha's and vociferous encores of the unsophisticated gallery. Such was the effect of his personation of that broadly-drawn caricature, *Mawworm ;* and it was this display of mimic powers, which was not confined to an individual but comprehended a *genus*, that induced the almost unprecedented complimentary tribute of — an *encore to one of his speeches !*

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Edinburgh, April 19th, 1816.

A thousand thanks for your letter. Be assured that I appreciate it, and shall ever remember it with pleasure. There was only one part which gave me pain ; it was that wherein you say you expect to hear every day until I am better. I felt this to be a reproach, being conscious that I had not written. I am now, thank God, quite recovered ; played again last night, and went all through my work as strong as ever. Now — after all you have said, and so kindly said, on the subject of Ireland—I almost fear to tell you, I am going after all. While ill, I felt exactly with you, and hoped not to go ; but now that I am in vigour again, I cannot but rejoice at the money I may get. Besides, I triumph over the great Frederick ! I could not avoid the alternative, for I said on such terms I will come, and Jones accepts.

Now, do not be alarmed about the journey ; I have so contrived as to sleep the two nights on the road, and as to the water, it is a beautiful, safe passage. I did it in two hours and a half last time. The mail packet always sails at one o'clock in the afternoon, so that we have six hours' day-light, and the passage is never so long. I shall write to Henry Harris to acquaint him, and to ask a few days more, to do all comfortably. I am doing great things here. My worst house still 103*l.*

Tuesday last, 113*l.*; last night, 120*l.* To-morrow, my benefit and last night. I shall get 300*l.* at least, which is enormous, if I had time to explain why. Yesterday, for four hours in the afternoon, as deep a snow as ever I saw at Christmas. I thought it would ruin the house.

C. Mathews.

After a successful engagement in Crow-street, Dublin, he returned to Covent Garden, where he remained until the end of the season, when he again visited the provinces for a brief term.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Clifton, June 9th, 1816.

My benefit at Bath was splendid on Saturday. I played *Rover*, with imitations; and *Lingo* went off capitally. The whole of the boxes were taken, every seat—all fashion and elegance—183*l.*! much better than my last benefit. They have not had 20*l.* any night this season, till Sinclair came, who played to good houses, but not at all equal to mine. General Bradshaw is at Bath; and came behind the other night, and lugged me up, in a very friendly manner, to a private box, where his wife was with some friends: they were very pleasant, and desired all manner of kind sayings to you.

I have just seen a Bath paper, where, to my utter amazement, I see Dimond has advertised me for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, without consulting me. Since I left Bath, I suppose Harry has transferred me over as live-stock for three nights more, and the other did not think it necessary to consult me. If I do act, I will be paid, rely upon it. I have no time to expatiate; but probably I may stay, though I am in a great rage. I only tell you not to expect me home till you see me. I shall think of Charley's little party to-day at the proper time, and drink his health. C. MATHEWS.

Notwithstanding his declaration that he would be *paid,* if he played any more in Bath, he was induced to do one of those liberal and kind actions to which his nature was so open—namely, to perform *gratis* for the benefit of his less fortunate friends.

When Mr. Mathews was in Dublin in the spring of this year, he engaged to return in August, for the purpose of performing in the same pieces with Mr. Liston, who was engaged there for the first time. On this occasion I accompanied him, which circumstance will account for a break in his correspondence. We remained a fortnight in Dublin, and then proceeded to Limerick, where he was expected to fulfil an engagement also.

We had been seriously cautioned, previously to quitting Dublin, not to be upon the road after dark, as several robberies, and even murders, had been committed in that part of the country recently. Our journey, under the most favourable circumstances, could not be accomplished in less than a long day; and the inevitable breaking of harness (*i.e.* ropes), and the time poor Pat took to "splice" it from his own little knot of tangled string, rendered it impossible that we should reach our destination until dark; so that we were both wearied, and had fallen asleep during the last stage. From this temporary forgetfulness we were startled by a fearful congregation of sounds, which turned out to be Irish! It wanted no acquaintance with the Hibernian mother-tongue to give us understanding of the point contested between the postilion and two figures who stood at the horses' heads. It was dreadfully clear to our awakened faculties that the men were footpads, and that their first object was to stop the horses. This was a frightful moment, to *me* at least, and I suspect, not a very comfortable one to Mr. Mathews. It was so dark that only the outline of the objects before us could be ascertained, but as it was evident for what purpose the contention with the driver was carried on,* it occurred to my husband (who was totally unprovided with fire-arms,) to intimidate the villains by a *finesse.* Making a dexterous use of the darkness of the evening, and without apprising me of his intention, he thrust out his arm at the front window of the chaise, as if presenting a pistol, exclaiming in a desperate tone—"If you don't let go the horses' heads I'll shoot you dead!" This threat proved good Irish as well as English, for the men instantly started aside to evade the danger, and the postilion promptly giving whip and spur to his horses, they started forward, and in a minute completely distanced the footpads. It was quite a melo-dramatic incident; and we were not a little pleased when we reached Limerick to find our friends, Mr. and Mrs. William Farren, ready to receive us at a comfortable house, where board and lodging were provided for our party during the fortnight's stay.

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* The man afterwards explained, that these ruffians bore bludgeons, with which they threatened him with instant death if he did not wait till they had robbed the persons in the carriage.

Here we found an intelligent landlord and an agreeable hostess, who with "a greedy ear" devoured up Mr. Mathews's discourse, when he ran through the "moving accident" and "hair-breadth 'scapes" of the day. "His story being done, she gave him for his pains a world of kindness. She loved him for the dangers he had passed, and he loved her that she did pity him." In fact, the good woman became a devotee to him; and remembering his device in charming away (as she called it) the ruffians, and daily observing his many other *charming* qualities, her admiration of them placed him in her estimation as a being of a superior sphere. She was, in fact, enchanted with my husband, who happened to be in good spirits at the time, and was moreover amused at her even childish delight at all he did.

One day Mr. Mathews placed a musical box (then a novelty) under the table after dinner, intending to surprise agreeably all present, but not wishing to deceive any one. Our hostess turned pale and red by turns. Terms were exhausted to express her admiration. The music, she averred, came from my husband's throat; nor could anything alter this simple person's conviction that Mr. Mathews's genius was capable of all things.

After a few days, our hostess's fervour abated and her manner changed. She no longer took delight in the attempts of her favourite to interest her. In vain he exerted himself: not a smile, not a word could be elicited by anything he did to entertain her. Suddenly she became utterly silent, even to the rest of the party; and when the ladies retired with her from the dinner-table she sat apart from them in a melancholy mood. No more raptures; no more praises. All admiration was suspended, and she seemed rapt in some absorbing reverie. Mrs. Farren and myself questioned her kindly, but her only answer to these inquiries for several days were tears, which streamed down her cheeks as if from the greatest mental agony. We had been informed by her husband, a very rational man, that his wife was a blind devotee to her religion, or, in other words, to her priest; and the explanation, which at last our perseverance induced her to make as to her present distress, sufficiently explained that the account had not been overcharged. Briefly, then, this poor woman had in the confessional whispered in her confessor's ear the indulgences she had given way to in listening to one of her lodgers. It *might* be a sin to enjoy so much gratification; it *might* require a slight penance to wash the *guilt* away; but the crafty priest saw a better result than could be won by the atonement she anticipated—namely, the waste of a few unboiled peas, or the omission of a meal. In short, the priest, taking advantage of the tenderness of this weak creature's conscience, soon gave her to understand that the matter was of greater importance than she supposed, and that her sin was one requiring the utmost exertion on her part to do away: she had clearly entertained under her roof a man of forbidden powers; and he questioned much the lawfulness of allowing such a person, so endued, to rest longer in her house. "Thus ended the first lesson." The poor woman went home to her husband, and mentioned her scruples of conscience. He, however, treated her feelings not only with ridicule, but harshness; for he was not so *good* a Catholic as herself; and again she flew to the priest for comfort and advice. This was the cue he waited for. He presented to her morbid imagination the moral danger of her position, the necessity of deep expiation. "What was to be done?" she asked. Without her husband's concurrence it was impossible to displace this dangerous guest — and that he refused. The priest at length conceived a way in which the stain upon her habitation and soul might be washed white as ermine-purity. Here our poor hostess stopped. She said, she dared not name the priest's proposal, lest Mr. Mathews should refuse compliance with the means, in which case a severe personal penance would be exacted of her for having sheltered so perilous a person. At last we prevailed upon the poor woman to reveal the extent of the requisition made, and she explained, that in order to set all to rights again she must, according to her confessor's suggestion, induce Mr. Mathews, before he quitted Limerick, to give the amount of one of his performances, for the purpose of finishing a chapel, then incomplete for want of funds! By this mode only could Mrs. — I forget her name — set her conscience free for entertaining under her roof so *unaccountable* a man. This story needs no comment. In a few days we left Limerick, and our poor hostess, to pacify her worthy confessor, and the throes of her own heavy-laden conscience, as best she might.

In the course of our journeyings in Ireland, Mr. Mathews was much amused with the Irish beggars, who were in the habit of surrounding inn-doors the moment English travellers stopped. We were posting from Dublin to Limerick, and thence to Cork, and specimens of this race were in every town and village, in readiness to pounce upon the unwary traveller. I never saw any of them without remembering, I think, Foote's wonder what English beggars did with their left-off clothes, which mystery was solved when he afterwards went to Ireland, and saw the beggars there. Surely, nothing more squalid and filthy can be met with elsewhere; but their wit and merriment even exceed their dirt. They are very apt to form themselves into partnerships, so that four or five of a firm will assail you under the same interests, but with separate claims. Sometimes, indeed, they affect hostility with each other's aim, but in a friendly and good-humoured manner. Thus it happened with one party we fell in with—three women, by whom our sympathies were invoked in the following manner:—"Ah! my lady! ah, your honour! have compassion on the blind, the lame, and the lazy" (!) "How's that?" said my husband. "Plaise your honour's glory, I am lame (as you see), this good woman's blind, and my daughter's lazy." "Well, well," said he to whom this truly original appeal was made, and who began to be amused at this novel mode of application, expecting some further drollery from her—"well, there's a fivepenny among you, that is, if you'll divide it equally."—"Oh! sure," answered the lazy, "it's no matter,—we're all one family."—"Oh," said the donor, "but I insist upon an equal division of the money in my presence, or I withdraw it." —"And so there shall be, your honour, if you'll *depind* upon my *vartue*," holding out her hand. "Yes, yes, but I must see you do it."—"And how, your honour, will I do it, seeing that it's impossible?"—"Very well, then, I shall not give it," said Mr. Mathews (still anticipating amusement from her ingenuity). Suddenly she seemed to have a thought, and with quickness asked, "Will your honour trust me with the five-penny to get changed?"—"Well," said he, after a short pause, "I *will*."—"God bless you for ever," and away she ran into the inn. On her return, after a minute's consideration, she placed three half-pence into each of the other women's hands, saying as she did so, "There's three halfpence for *you*, good woman—there's three halfpence for *you*, good woman—and here's three halfpence for *me*, good woman." Then, looking for an instant perplexed at the remaining halfpenny, she suddenly darted into a little huxter's shop opposite to the inn, and as speedily returned with a pair of old scissors in one hand, and a bit of what is called pig-tail tobacco in the other, saying, as she measured it with her eye, and divided it, "There's one bit for *you*, good woman—"there's one bit for *you*, good woman; and here's one bit for *me*, good woman. Ah! now, haven't I done it *nately*, your honour?"

At another halting-place we were again surrounded by a party of ragged creatures. I kept within the carriage, and closed the window against their importunities and dirt; but my husband met character face to face wherever he found it, and in whatever garb, and therefore got out to talk to them.

"Ah, your honour!" (exclaimed a troop simultaneously) "ah! your honour, relave the poor crathurs!" and then ensued the usual din and importunity. One woman at last, taking the lead of the rest, began—"Ah! your good-looking honour! God presarve your beautiful eyes for many a day! Ah! your good-looking honour, have pity upon the poor Irish! Ah! bless your handsome, good-looking face!"—"No," said Mr. Mathews to the woman so obtrusive in praise of his beauty: "No, I won't give you a farthing, because of your flattery; so go away."—"Ah, Judy!" (said another woman of the party) "ah, Judy! you've done for yourself wid your buttering people over as you do. Sure, it's a lie *altogither*. The gintleman knows that himself's as plain a looking man as I'd wish to clap my two eyes upon; get out wid your blarney."— "Very well," said Mr. Mathews, "I will give *you* something for your candour. There, there," (giving her a fivepenny,) "and here, here are some halfpence, which the rest may scramble for," and in order to get rid of them, while he returned to the carriage, he threw a handful down, which brought them all upon their hands and knees, and upon one another, on the ground, pushing and keeping each other off, as they turned up the "coppers" out of the dust.

By this time the horses were *corded to*, and these jovial beggars all came round the carriage, blessing and wishing their benefactor all the good luck imaginable; and the woman whose plain speaking had done so much for her, bawled after him as we drove off, "Long life to your honour! *Has your mother any more of ye?*"

One more specimen. Two women in a wretched village solicited alms in the usual way—one with a squalid infant at her back, and another in her hand, was very importunate; the other woman's most strenuous efforts were exerted to restrain her, in order to put herself forward. "Ah, sure, Katty, you 're always putting yourself in the gintry's way; ye get more in a day than I, God knows, get in a month. Ah! your honour, give a trifle to a poor distressed crathur, who has nothing for hersilf but what such charitable gintry gives her."—"Well," said 'his honour,' "keep back and I will give you both something." (Here a torrent of blessings were poured upon his head.) "I suppose," said he, "ye divide equally what ye get?" "We ought, sir; but, if there 's an odd halfpenny, this good woman takes it to herself."—"Sure, so I ought," said the 'good woman,' "I 've two *childer*."—"Yes," urged the other, "but sure I take snuff."—"And more 's the shame for you," replied her companion. "This good woman, your honour, she'll take two ounces of snuff every day of her life, if she can get it; and that 's a shame, sure, for the likes of her to do."—"Well," urged

Katty, in a most pathetic appeal to the judgment of him she addressed, "well! and what's two ounces of snuff a day to a poor crathur that gives suck?" The plea was irresistible, and she received another five-penny on the admitted score of her maternal obligations.

Piqued and wearied by the ill-direction of his powers for nearly five years at Covent Garden Theatre, his "Fate cried out" against it. Mr. Mathews at last applied to Mr. Harris to relinquish further claim upon him for the remainder of his legal term. The request was yielded, apparently with the feeling of a person who, having long possessed a piece of musical mechanism by which he was first diverted and afterwards wearied, believing that all its tunes had been *played out*, was glad to get rid of it at a small sacrifice. This was a great mistake on the part of Mr. Harris; but he knew not all the *stops* of the organ he set so little store by, and which required only a discriminating touch to draw forth, not only variations of what had been already listened to, but more original and eloquent combinations than were dreamt of in the manager's philosophy. Such discrimination had Mr. Arnold. He calculated with nicety and judgment upon the great capabilities of the instrument; and it was reserved for his skilful hand to point out the hidden springs which ever afterwards discoursed such fine harmonies.

Once more his "own man again" for a short period, Mr. Mathews was enabled to revisit the provinces, where he never failed to be well received and rewarded.

The following letter will serve as an introduction to an account of Mr. Mathews's performance at Norwich at this time.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Norwich, Jan. 24th, 1817.

I have met with nothing here but civility and real *Irish* hospitality. I have had five invitations to-day to dinner, Sir E. Berry, the Rev. Mr. Ives, Rev. Mr. Blofield, &c. They are a charming audience; and I have hit them.

The "stars" have lied about the capability of the town; theatrically, it is a sort of York. The most any of them have made in the week, so my manager says, is 60*l*. I have done wonders, for my share is already 60*l*. without my benefit; so that I have no fear of making a 100*l*. clear.

C. Mathews.

Norwich, Jan. 1817.

Mr. Mathews's proper distinguishing faculty is mimicry; this it is which gives him his strong and irresistible hold on his audience. He is a Proteus, that can assume at pleasure any shape; and his mobility is truly astonishing. When Scarron made his *Rancour* boast of having performed the parts of the *King*, the *Queen*, and the *Ambassadors*, all upon the stage at once, as the perfection of a stroller, he little dreamt of the appearance of a metropolitan actor, a century afterwards, who should present a French hair-dresser, an English cook, and a little boy, all upon the stage at once, and, so as to complete the purposed deception of an individual who is to be the dupe of the artifice; but Mr. Mathews does all this to admiration in "Killing no Murder," besides the representation of three other characters in the course of the same farce, and an almost innumerable collection of *petite* exhibitions, (such as the ambulatory *Mr. Punch* of the London streets,) which he contrives to throw in gratuitously, as it were. The mobility of the imagination we have described has always appeared to us to be the most extraordinary trait in the minds of actors; and we are persuaded that it is the capital creative faculty to which dramatic excellence (of the comic kind more especially) is to be attributed.

Let us add, that the humour of Mr. Mathews is as rich as exuberant, and that even in the most dangerous and alluring exhibitions of what has been most extravagantly imagined by the author, the actor is never, to our observance, drawn into a coarse or offensively vulgar presentation. *Mr. Wiggins*, in which we have seen him, is as broad as broad can be, yet we never remember to have relished such a thing more; and we were indeed surprised at the talent which made a most laughable out of a most contemptible absurdity. Mr. Mathews can also become a comedian of chaste conception and refined expression.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

24th Jan. 1817,
5, Melina-place, Westminster-road.

DEAR MATHEWS,

The time has arrived (perhaps a little gone by) for closing engagements of the most consequence to the Haymarket Theatre. But I have waited thus long since our last interview, when I broached my present business to you, in the hope that you "would come, at last, to comfort me." Have the goodness, now, to decide whether you will or will not belong to the chosen few. It is unnecessary to tell you, that I shall be gratified in the renewal of a professional commerce with one in whom talent and zealous integrity are combined.

I should have spoken in the plural throughout, for I give you the sentiments of myself and Co.

Very truly yours, G. Colman.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the foregoing letter led the way to the engagement it aimed at; and it was arranged that Mr. Mathews should again appear at the Haymarket at the opening of the theatre.

The following letter will justify some observations of mine in a previous page, upon the extreme labour of an actor's profession.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Worcester, May 5th, 1817.

Never did I go through such toil in my life: riding to Hereford, thirty-two miles; acting the same night in the most horrible confusion of a divided company (and you know my sort of fag); next night again, three parts; Wednesday, twenty-four miles to Ludlow; acted that night and the next; yesterday to Worcester, thirty-two miles: three parts last night. My strength, however, has borne me out, and my voice last night was better than when I started. If I had not (though unwillingly) done this, Worcester would not have paid anything. They made up their minds to come one night, my own; but they will do nothing for Crisp. His stock houses are from 2*l*. to 5*l*., and never more.

Elliston's popularity here as manager last year has made Crisp's twopenny troop despised. With this I had 54*l.*, half of which was mine; and my week has produced me 87*l.*, which is enormous, for I would have taken 40*l.* for my share last Tuesday.

I start to-night for Chester, where I act on Monday. I shall play there all the week if I don't hear anything imperative from Browning, to whom I have written this post. I could not wait so long his answer, on the chance of going to Cambridge; if I had I must have given up Chester, where I shall certainly get another 80*l.*; but Cambridge will do on my return.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Chester, Wednesday, May 9th, 1817.

Thanks for your long letter, (which arrived at one, being race-time,) and the cheerfulness with which you wrote. I cannot find time to write to * * * * *; but you must apologize for me; and tell her it is impossible for me to play for her. In the first place, Harris would not allow it, for he made me promise not to play anywhere in town; and in the next, it is ten to one I shall be at too great a distance, for I must act out of London till the Haymarket opens; and if I promised her it would entirely prevent my making engagements. I could say much more, but have not time.

I finish here next Monday, and start next day for home—thank God! for that company would kill any man, used to regularity, in a month.

Chester is very gay just now; the town full; and the race-course one of the prettiest sights in England. The theatre is well attended; and the manager, out of the theatre, makes me very comfortable. His house, where I am living, is very pleasantly situated. Though Chester is a dismal town, there is not one house to intercept a country view from the manager's residence.

I acted for Brunton on Saturday night, and sat up with him and Elliston till Crisp's stage started at two. He drove his whole company. At eleven I met my horse, previously sent cross-country, and rode fifty miles to Chester; ninety miles altogether, without going to bed. We arrived at Chester at seven, where I enjoyed most delicious fatigue, and suffered no other inconvenience.

Charles Mathews.

This month proved one of great interest to Mr. Mathews. On the 17th of June, his dramatic idol, John Kemble, took his leave of the public. It was an affecting evening, although in a great measure gratifying to his friends and admirers. After the curtain dropped upon his last bow, a relic of this great ornament to his profession was eagerly sought by all who crowded round the "last of all the Romans." He presented the sandals he had worn that night in *Coriolanus,* to my husband, who exclaimed, as he bore away his prize, "I may wear his sandals, but no one will ever *stand in his shoes.*"

On the 27th a public farewell-dinner was given to Mr. Kemble. Lord Holland took the head of the table, and on his right hand sat the object of the meeting; on his left the Duke of Bedford. Messrs. Young, C. Kemble, and Mathews, presided at the other tables. After the presentation of a splendid vase, prepared by some of his admirers, an ode was recited by Mr. Young, from the pen of Campbell, the Bard of Hope. Lord Holland then proposed "the health of Mr. Mathews, (at the same time proclaiming him to have been the suggester as well as promoter of the compliment to Mr. Kemble,) and the Committee," which distinction was acknowledged by Mr. Mathews in an appropriate speech.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mr. Mathews at the Haymarket Theatre.—His sudden illness. —Disappointment of the audience.—Absurd critique.—Mr. Mathews in the "Actor of All Work."—Letter from Mrs. Siddons.—Unnecessary offers of assistance.—Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Worthing.—Unintentional compliment.—Methodistical play-goers.—Visit to France by Mr. Mathews and Mr. Yates.—Letters to Mrs. Mathews from Boulogne and Cambray.—French postilions.—Lord Hill.—Sir Anderson Bernard.—The Duke of Wellington.—Mr. Mathews at dinner with his Grace.—Dinner at Lord Hill's.—Festivities at the British head-quarters.—Mr. Mathews and the Commandant of Lisle.—Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Valenciennes.—Mr. Mathews in Edinburgh.—Letters to Mrs. Mathews.—Reception in Edinburgh of the "Actor of All Work."—Awkward situation in the Courts of Law.—Extraordinary success. —Mr. Harris's mistaken estimate of Mr. Mathews's talent. —Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Newcastle.—Letter from Mr. Mathews to his son.—Legal outrage.—Trial at Law.—Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Adolphus.—The verdict.—Congratulations.

The Haymarket season, which commenced this year on the 7th of July, brought Mr. Mathews once more before a summer audience in London, after an absence of two years. He made his appearance in *Scout*, in "The Village Lawyer," one of those unique performances not to be described, and the enthusiasm with which he was hailed is equally indescribable.

On the 15th, the comedy of "Wild Oats" was announced, and Mr. Mathews's first appearance in the character of *Rover*, with *Imitations*. The day before that on which this performance was to take place, he had visited the Tower and the wild beasts; upon which occasion, he was much amused with the person who described the curiosities of the first, (himself the greatest curiosity among them,) and had so long a *chat* with the animals, that the excitement, added to the excessive heat of the day, and his imitation of what he had seen, together with a copious draught of iced water, so affected him, that, on our return home, he complained of spasmodic symptoms in the chest, which increased so much as to render it necessary to send a message to the theatre, to announce his inability to perform that night. But as his indisposition was deemed of a temporary nature, no alteration was made in the announcement of the following morning. Unfortunately, he then found himself still unfit to appear in public. Placards were hastily put up at the doors of the theatre, announcing this circumstance; but, as it often happens on such occasions, the bills were unnoticed by the crowd. The consequences of this disappointment are best explained in the following contemporary account.

The performances at the Haymarket Theatre were interrupted for some time last night, caused by the circumstance that Mr. Mathews had been announced to appear as *Rover*, in the comedy of "Wild Oats," with "Imitations," an addition which certainly was destined to give this droll character peculiar attraction. The house was crowded. The play commenced, and everything went on sufficiently tame until the voice of *Rover*, blustering at a distance, "the brisk lightning I" was heard, and the tone was so different from that of Mathews, that it was instantly applauded all over the theatre, as an excellent imitation. "Ay, here's the rattle," said *Harry Thunder*. This was the signal for another peal of approbation; but, when *Rover* made his appearance on the stage, and it was evident that it was *not* Mathews, astonishment was visible in every countenance. No intimation of the change had been given!—no apology had been made!—the indulgence of the audience was not solicited! Accordingly, there was an unanimous expression of disapprobation; and a general cry for "the manager." Mr. Russell, who appeared as *Rover*, then came forward and said, "that he did not intrude himself into the character, which he believed would be much better performed by Mr. Mathews; that he was in some measure compelled to take the part, by the duty which he owed to the proprietors of the theatre; that it could not be expected he should answer for the illness of the gentleman who was announced for the character; and that, if it was the pleasure of the audience, he would instantly withdraw." This was followed by a shout of "Bravo! bravo!" but still the cry for "the manager" did not cease, and an "apology" was loudly demanded. Mr. Barnard, who was on the stage as *Harry Thunder*, then came forward and assured the audience that two hundred bills had been printed and distributed at the door, for the purpose of informing the public, that in consequence of the *continued* indisposition of Mr. Mathews, the character of *Rover* would be sustained by Mr. Russell.

But the most curious part of this affair remains to be told. My husband, taking up the newspaper on the following morning, read a criticism upon his performance of the previous night, giving an elaborate and consecutive account of *his* (Mr. Mathews's) acting in each scene; and, in fact, pronouncing the whole a most inefficient attempt, and deservedly a failure! This severity might have been excused under the plea that the reporter did not know Mr. Mathews's person, but had disapproved of the *Rover* he *saw;* but such an excuse was denied the critic by the great stress he laid upon every imitation Mr. Mathews gave in the course of the play; and, above all, the writer's objection to his too *apparent lameness*, which, it was affirmed, unfitted him totally for the character. This was too much. Mr. Russell's figure was unexceptionable—nay, graceful. In short, my husband declared vengeance against the writer; but, like all such declarations, it was forgotten after the first burst of anger had evaporated. In a day or two he redeemed his pledge to the public, and performed *Rover* with very great effect, his imitations giving a high zest to the part, and making a very strong additional feature. His performance proved very attractive, and the comedy was frequently repeated during the season.

In August, Mr. Colman produced the "Actor of all Work," which was written, as a contemporary critic observes—

> "To display the wonderful imitative powers of Mathews. Often as we have been called upon to admire them, we certainly were never till now aware of half their extent. The infinite variety of his transformations will be best shown by a brief description of the characters he personated. On the rising of the curtain he entered as *Multiple*, a strolling actor, in great agitation at being refused an engagement by *Velinspeck*, a country manager, who, it appears, had expressed doubts of his talents, and particularly of his versatility. In a short soliloquy he announced his determination to convince this insulting manager of the grossness of his error, and departed to make the requisite preparation. We are next introduced to *Mr. Velinspeck*, who gives a ludicrous detail of the disasters which had befallen the various members of his company, and the straits to which he is in consequence reduced. His complaints are interrupted by a knocking at the door, and Mathews enters disguised as *Mathew Stuffy*, an applicant for a situation as prompter, for which he says he is peculiarly qualified by that affection of the eyes commonly called squinting, which enables him to keep one eye on the performers, and the other on the book at the same time. This *Stuffy* is one of the richest bits of humour we ever witnessed; his endless eulogies upon the state of things "in the late immortal Mr. Garrick's time," are highly ludicrous. We suspect this to be a "sketch from real life." The prompter now departs, but is immediately succeeded

by a *French Tragedian*, who proposes to *Velinspeck* an entertainment of recitation and singing. This character is intended for a portrait of Talma, and the resemblance must be instantly felt and acknowledged by all who are acquainted with the peculiarities of that Roscius of the French stage. It is always received with clamorous applause, by those who have seen Talma, for its fidelity. The command of countenance which Mathews here displays is most wonderful; never was anything more completely French than the face he assumes, and never was any character dressed more to the life. This imitation of Talma has given rise to some remarks in the *Journal des Debats*, remarkable only for their extreme shallowness. Next enters *Robin Scrawkey*, a runaway apprentice, smit with the desire of "cleaving the general ear with horrid speech." After a ludicrous colloquy between him and the manager, he expresses his apprehension of being pursued by his master, and takes refuge in a room on the first floor, which is open to the audience. He here quickly changes his dress, slips down the back stairs, and in the lapse of two minutes enters again as *Andrew M'Sillergrip*, a Scotch pawnbroker, in search of his runaway apprentice, the aforesaid *Robin Scrawkey*, whom he pursues up stairs, and is heard to assail him with blows and violent abuse. He again alters his dress, and re-appears immediately as *Mrs. M'Sillergrip*, who expresses great fears of an attack upon her honour by the manager, and joins the imaginary party up stairs. The skill of Mathews in carrying on a conversation between three persons is here executed with most astonishing effect. Finally, he enters as a fat *Coachman*, out of patience at waiting for three worthies, whom he has engaged to convey to Dover; and presently, to the utmost astonishment and confusion of the manager, convinces him that the whole of the characters who have appeared before him have been personated by the identical comedian whose talents he had just before estimated so lightly. He is, of course, gladly engaged on his own terms, and the piece concludes.

It will be seen by this brief sketch, that a stronger call was never made on the powers of Mathews, and he never before exerted them with such extraordinary success. The popularity of this piece is unprecedented ; and we understand the nightly receipts have exceeded those of any former season."

Impromptu on Mr. Mathews.

If, by acting one part so much honour be gained,
  Pray tell, if it be in your power,
What honour, what meed, shall by him be obtained,
  Who acts seven parts in one hour?

The following are the remarks alluded to in the *Journal des Debats.* They are curious, and the more remarkable from the fact, that in a few months afterwards the same imitations, here reprobated and called caricatures, were applauded to the very echo in the country whence the censure came; and the "Actor of All *Works,*" as he is called by the critic, became a general favourite, although the only parts of the performance that could be thoroughly appreciated by the natives were those very imitations of their own favourite actors.

We have lately learned, that there is in London a theatre, which, like our Théatre des Variétés, has its Potier, its Brunet, its occasional pieces, and its caricatures; and it was to be expected that national malice should be exercised on the interesting visits lately made to the English by some of our principal artists.

In a little piece performed at the Haymarket, entitled the "Actor of All Works, or the Universal Performer," Talma, or, rather a buffoon who had undertaken his character, has prodigiously amused the worthy gentlemen. He presents himself to the manager of the theatre, makes a pompous display of his various talents, — he is the great tragedian of the Great Theatre at Paris; plays every part, and is embarrassed only in the choice. The manager assures him of the indulgence of the English public, and promises him a reception apportioned to his talents. The French actor apprises him of his plan,—if he be not permitted to give a complete representation, he can, at least, give specimens of declamation. The manager expresses some doubts as to his right to permit such a representation on his stage; but the adroit stranger finds an easy expedient, — he will declaim gratis, but they must pay for the concert. He then gives a specimen of his powers, and recites some verses from *Andromaque*. This caricature of French declamation has been found excellent. It is thought impossible to give with more truth, strength, and expression, the wild attitudes, the disordered looks, the bursts of false passion, and, at the same time, the triviality, the low and hurried tone, and in general, all the absurd and unnatural system of French declamation. In the midst of this burlesque imitation, Talma receives some compliments, which, "to the honour of the English nation," says the English journalist, "were received with unanimous applause." We, too, in our turn will say, that no conclusion should be drawn from an exaggerated imitation against Talma, and the other performers of the Great Theatre, and that nothing would be more easy for us than to take our revenge and adopt reprisals. There is, however, in the lessons of rivalry something of which it would be well for Talma and his comrades to take advantage, avoiding, for instance, to assume an agreeable familiarity for nature; bombast for dignity; a forced pantomime for a true expression of the passions.

TO CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, 27, Upper Baker-street, August 26th.

I have heard so much of the "Actor of All Work," and have so great an admiration of your talents, that I cannot resist troubling you with a request that I am sure your good nature will pardon; — it is, that you will have the goodness to procure a private box to give me that pleasure. Allow me, sir, to assure you, that if your compliance is likely to be attended by the least inconvenience, I shall attribute your refusal to those motives of propriety that are indispensable, and not to any disinclination to gratify Your sincere admirer,

and obliged humble servant,

S. SIDDONS.

Mr. Colman has always been so kind as to admit me to the theatre, and I flatter myself that he would not be averse to favouring me with a box any day this week, except Friday.

At the close of the Haymarket Theatre, Mr. Mathews resumed his provincial pursuits, and his correspondence with myself.

It seems strange, that whenever an individual attempt is successfully made, a general desire should be created to imitate the plan, whether with or without ability or means. What is still more strange, however, is, that when it is clearly manifest that individuality has constituted the pith and charm of the enterprise, people, not without judgment in other respects, should propose to nullify this success by offering their co-operation, forgetting that it is the very popularity of the plan, the basis of which they would thus infallibly upset, which has induced them to make this offer.

As soon as Mr. Mathews proved his singular power in his "At Homes," and that he could attract overflowing audiences, without any personal assistance, he was assailed by proposals of all sorts, from all sorts of people, to be admitted into his entertainment. When he was performing in Dublin to crowded houses, a conjurer, then exhibiting there to almost empty benches, wrote to him, absurdly offering him his "services," upon the consideration of receiving an "equal share of Mr. Mathews's profits." I have found also an application of the kind from a lady of great experience, a remarkable person in her day. I shall give this without apology, as one instance amongst the many, of an oversight quite extraordinary under the circumstances.

MY DEAR SIR, September 27, 1817.

The papers inform me that you are to give your "Actor of All Work," in the manner of Mr. Bannister, and Mrs. Mountain.* Can you, my dear sir, employ my poor remaining abilities to any small advantage to myself; at the same time it would be doing me an essential service: I mean to offer my imitations of Mrs. Siddons, and the late Mrs. Jordan.

I am always, my dear sir,
Your very obliged humble servant,
L. SUMBEL.

New Cavendish-street, Portland-place.

I scarcely need explain that Mrs. Sumbel was formerly Mrs. Wells, the original *Cowslip*, and on whose benefit night in Dublin, Mr. Mathews made his first appearance in public. This lady my husband was most desirous to oblige, but on the present occasion it was impossible; and of this she was convinced after a little explanation.

TO MRS. MATHEWS

Worthing, October 1st, 1817.

I am just arrived here, and shall stay till Sunday. My benefit last night produced 105*l.*, making my profits since last Wednesday, 140*l.*; so I have got beyond the right reading. This is 40*l.* beyond my most sanguine guess.

I must tell you a "little anecdote," which is the greatest compliment that I ever received. During my performance at Brighton, Mrs. George Farren's mother and sister went to see me "At Home:" the former was so disgusted at my "imposition on the public," that she actually left the house at the end of the ventriloquy, and dragged her daughter with her. She said it ought to be exposed in the public papers, for that she saw the man under the stage give me up the wine,—and that people could be such fools as to believe I spoke for that child, and the old man, so provoked her, that she would not stay to be one of them.

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* Mr. Bannister and Mrs. Mountain had severally travelled in the provinces for a season, with their "Budget" of personal talents, with much success, some years previously.—A. M.

I patronise your plan with Charles. Tell him that I am fagging at French myself now.

C. Mathews.

Southampton, October 11th, 1817.

The whole of yesterday I was absent on a trip to the Isle of Wight, and most delightful it was. An old friend, a Mr. Lynn, took me over in his yacht; we returned and dined aboard, and got home in the evening.

I have received great attention here. Mrs. Siddons's friend, Mrs. Fitzhugh, called on me. One morning, to my great amazement, I saw a procession of about eight persons enter my drawing-room, my bed-room door being open; and when I entered, I perceived Mr. Cooke the Methodist clergyman, and family, and other regular bred Methodists of the town. Think of that!

C. Mathews.

Mr. Cooke was one of those well-educated and liberal Christians who recommend religion by their own example; too sincere in himself to suppose it necessary to be always *talking* goodness to others, and too well-bred and feeling to insult those he might find less excellent than himself. Several like him, whom I used to meet in my husband's family, were alone sufficient to redeem a whole conventicle of *Mawworms.* I well remember a Northamptonshire preacher who always came up to London when Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble performed, for the pleasure of hearing them. He admitted to me, that this was unknown to his connexion, but he saw no impropriety in such a gratification: still, he had no right, he said, to shock the prejudices of his sect by thus proclaiming his opinion of their narrowness of mind. On the occasions of the "At Homes," however, many of Mr. Mathews's family connexions were followers of his "Lectures," and did not hesitate to acquaint themselves with the inside of a theatre to hear their old friend's son "hold forth," to whom it would otherwise have been unknown; these were always observed to be amongst the most delighted of the audience.

Pursuant to an arrangement made with Mr. Yates, Mr. Mathews visited France for the first time, towards the close of this year. The plan was, to perform the "Actor of All Work," wherever the English were deemed numerous enough to make up an audience commensurate with his views. Mr. Yates was to perform "the manager," not only in the above piece, but in all things else where Mr. Mathews found himself in want of an assistant.

Mr. Yates was at this time young upon the stage, but gave promise of the superior talents he has since matured. He was a most agreeable companion, and a great favourite with Mr. Mathews, while his acquaintance with French customs, and English officers stationed abroad,—from his knowledge of them while a youth in the commissariat department—rendered him a more than commonly desirable fellow-traveller on such an expedition. The following letters, somewhat in the form of a narrative, will explain themselves, and render any interruption of mine unnecessary during the period to which they relate.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Boulogne, December, 1817.

Being very suspicious of the safety of the post from this country, I send you a sort of duplicate of the letter which went by that conveyance, to say, I arrived at Calais on Thursday at half past three, after a very pleasant passage of four hours. Colonel Powell, who knew the Rolls's and all their connexions, travelled with us to Dover, embarked with us, and was our companion next day in the diligence; a very pleasant man, and a great acquisition to us. We found the inn admirable, extremely clean, and the dinner and wine delicious. The only thing I have hitherto found unpleasant is, that there are no grates, and no coals; and I am not yet reconciled to their wood fires. As to wine, all Englishmen are ignorant what it is. What they call "vin ordinaire," 1*s.* 8*d.* per bottle, is I think quite as good as the Burgundy at the Piazza Coffee House for which they charge 18*s.*; it is all pure juice of the grape.

I dined yesterday at Joe Kelly's, whom we found just as we left poor Mic., confined with rheumatic gout.

In this town there are three or four hundred English families. Considerable difficulties have arisen in the way of my performing here, which I have overcome, and have issued my bills for to-morrow night. There is a French company here, and the conductor has a control over all performances. The mayor himself could not give me consent without I sent my bills in a private manner to the English, only as a sort of invite. This has been done, and I have got a large room, which I expect to fill; and if it succeeds, I shall have another night on my return.

On Thursday we set off for Cambray, the Duke's head-quarters. The officers here say I shall get 150*l.* there, and that it is certain to answer well.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Cambray, December, 1817.

We arrived here safely, after a most tedious journey yesterday. We hired a cabriolet at Boulogne, and set off at twelve o'clock on Tuesday night, and posted all the way here, ninety miles. The travelling would be horrible but for the oddity of the postillions: their dresses, their manners, and their whip-smacking, when passing through villages, has never failed to make me roar with laughter; but no description can give a notion of their carriages; all the caricatures we have seen of them are but faint representations. We hired what was supposed to be a remarkably comfortable carriage. It poured with rain the whole of the night, and the water came in upon us as if poured from three or four little teapots. Their roads too, being paved like our towns, make the shaking and rattling intolerable.

Cambray is a very fine old town, something like the provincial towns in Ireland, but with a magnificent *place*, or square, which exceeds anything in our towns.

Nothing can surpass the hospitality and kindness we have met with from the English officers here. We have been removed from our *auberge* to-day, at the command of Lord Hill, who has given us a room in his billet; and Sir Andrew Barnard, with whom we dined yesterday, and who introduced us to about twenty at dinner, insists on our taking our meals with him. He has run about the town, advertised tickets for my first night to be had at his office, (being commandant of the town,) sold some himself at his own house, and took the money — got me a room—leave—in short, he has taken all trouble from me.

The Duke of Wellington is here, or rather, twelve miles off, at his château; has private theatricals going on; and we are invited to join in them on Tuesday. This I call an *event*. *I* never met a finer set of fellows in my life than I have hitherto seen, or such real solid hospitality. I saw Colonel Higginson yesterday, who was warm *for him*. He was invited, but could not attend. Poole is coming to me on Sunday, and quite delighted at the prospect of seeing me. I am told I shall do here for three nights; then to Valenciennes.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Cambray, December 26th, 1817.

I did not tell you my receipt at Boulogne, because it was bad, and I was in the dismals about the expedition, thinking Yates had entirely misled me, but since that I have changed my mind, and "all is blue." I have not time to relate my reception, which was delightful. I dined at the Duke of Wellington's château on Tuesday. Nothing could be more gratifying. He was affable and good-natured beyond description. I experienced a most curious feeling of pleasure, for I had never seen him before: that the first time should be at his own table was remarkable. I was treated "as one of the party" in every instance. The Duke of Richmond and family were there. I played billiards with the Duke, and the hero of Waterloo marked a part of the game! When he came into the room he said, "Well, Duke, does Mr. Mathews play billiards as well as he acts; if he does, he will beat us all?" It was sometimes so like Charley Young that I could hardly keep my countenance.

Yesterday I dined at Lord Hill's; still more flattering, for it was quite *en famille*, and I was not expected to "do something." Poole is here, and has been invited everywhere with me, except the Duke of Wellington's. It was very pleasant to give him such a day as yesterday. He desires love to you. I leave this place for Valenciennes on Sunday; shall play there two nights; and expect to be home on Monday or Tuesday, 5th or 6th, in my way to Scotland. I have only just returned from Lord Hill's château, and have refused all invitations for to-day, that Pooley and I, and Yates, may dine together, to drink dear Charley's health, and many happy returns of the day. I will write to you before I start, to tell you when to expect me.

Charles Mathews.

The festivities at the British head-quarters are thus noticed in a private letter from Cambray, December 29th.

Great festivities have been going forward this Christmas at the head-quarters of the British army. The Duke of Wellington has had his château (twelve miles from hence) crowded with visiters. The officers of the staff have performed several dramatic pieces with great effect. Mathews has been out here, and was invited by the Duke to the château; he gave his celebrated "Mail-coach Adventures," and also his "Actor of All Work," with great effect. The temporary theatre is very neatly fitted up. The Duke of Richmond and his family, Lord Hill, &c. were highly delighted with the amusements of the château.

Lisle, December 31st, 1817.

On the evening of the 31st of December, Mr. Mathews, the celebrated comedian, arrived with an English friend at Lisle. Understanding that the gates were shut at six o'clock, they accepted the offer of the Commandant of Valenciennes, (one of our officers,) to write a day or two before, to the Commandant of Lisle, to allow them to enter the town, in case the gates should be shut. They arrived at the gates a few minutes after six, and, had it not been for the unnecessary delay occasioned by the *douaniers* in searching their baggage, would have been in time to enter. On presenting themselves at the first gate, however, they were informed that they could not be admitted. They then represented that a letter had been written to the commandant to allow them to pass. After many entreaties they were admitted through the first gate, and the porter consented to send a message to the commandant, while they awaited his permission. After being detained three quarters of an hour, the diligence from Paris arrived, which is allowed to enter at any hour. Two cabriolets, with French travellers, stole in at the heels of the diligence. After some parley with the porter, the French travellers offered him a bribe, which was accepted.

The postillion of Mr. Mathews and friend observing this, hinted that a similar offer from them would probably be as effective as the order for which they were impatiently waiting. They accordingly gave a five-franc piece to the porter. Shortly after they were allowed to pass the second gate, and enter the town, but were detained at the first guard-house, and on inquiring the cause, were told they must wait till their passport was examined. They waited more than half an hour, and observed that the French travellers, who had no order for admission, moved off undisturbed. At last a messenger arrived, who informed them that the Mayor de Place said, they could not be allowed to proceed. They asked to see the officer of the guard. A young man of gentlemanly appearance then presented himself. They represented their situation, and the suspense in which they had been kept, and entreated that one of them might be allowed to see the commandant, being confident a letter had been written to him, and that, were he acquainted with the true state of the case, he would allow them to remain in the town. The only notice of this appeal was, "*c'est inutile, sortez ;*" and though they represented the partiality shown to the French travellers, the gates were re-opened, and they were actually turned out of the town amidst the jeers of the French soldiers, and the shouts of a mob of boys. After being detained two hours in an intensely cold night, they were obliged to put up at a wretched waggoners' inn in the fauxbourgs, the misery of which can only be understood by those who have travelled through the country.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Valenciennes, January 1st, 1818.

I arrived here yesterday, safe, well, and in good health. I perform here to-night, and to-morrow night. It is a very fine theatre.

We dined yesterday with Sir Manly Power, commander-in-chief of this district, and met with the same hospitable reception and promises of support as at Cambray. The Scotch expedition will force me away, however, directly. Wednesday and Thursday are such holidays here with the French, that we cannot have the theatre on those nights (a French company being here,) if we wished it.

C. MATHEWS.

On their return to England, Mr. Mathews separated from Mr. Yates, professionally, as will be seen by his letters descriptive of his visit to Scotland, where Mr. Yates was, I believe, engaged as a tragedian.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Edinburgh, January 1818.

I thought the hurricanes were peculiar to this severe climate,* and that it was my luck brought them upon

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* It may be remembered, that this was a year of fearful tempests on land as well as at sea.—A. M.

Edinburgh. You remember my last trip and illness here. Exactly the same sudden change took place this time. Went to sleep after supper at Berwick,—warm night,—awoke in snow. On Monday night, "where I slept the chimneys were blown down," houses unroofed, and the whole city was covered with slates, bricks, chimney-tops, &c.; the damage to a chapel, newly built, alone is 1000*l.* This has continued nearly the whole week, and at intervals of quiet nothing but snow. I have not had one walk since I have been here, except from the theatre to my lodgings. I expected the theatre would be ruined by it. My two first nights were not so good as in former years, and I began to fear; but the cunning rogues were lying by for the "Actor of All Work," which we did not produce till Thursday, and now the business is done. Such a hit!—After studying the Irishman,* I was told if I did not act it as a Scotchman it would be considered a bad compliment to their sense, since it was as well known in Edinburgh as London by reputation; and I therefore played as *sich;* and it was by far the best hit in the piece:—they roared at every line. Murray acted the manager; and when I said, "I'm told you-a set up a show i' this toon," the screech was immense. I am in high spirits.

C. Mathews.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Edinburgh, Jan. 19th, 1818.

This will be a most successful trip. They are flocking to the box-office this morning to obtain places for almost every night for the "Actor of All Work." They have quite confirmed my opinion of them, that they are the only real theatrical audience in the three kingdoms. Every line of *Stuffy* is literally a roar here, and many points that were unnoticed at the Haymarket, are here caught up with avidity. As to their reception of my Scotchman, it is the most good-natured thing I ever met with. They gave me on Saturday night three or four rounds for merely saying the words "Fie mon! hoo, hoo con I recoont aw the perteeclers o' his insanity?" because I hit upon their intonation very luckily. I am in high feather, and the attentions of Murray and Mrs. Henry Siddons, the comforts of the theatre, my dressing-room, altogether make this the only theatre, out of London, where I like my profession. I was placed in a most awkward situation in the Courts of Law on Saturday. Erskine,* while pleading, glanced his eye towards me, stopped, laughed, and shook his fist at me. This drew the eyes of about two hundred people upon me. I blushed up to the eyes. When he sat down, I observed he wrote a note with a pencil to the Judge, Lord Gillies. He craned his neck directly to look at me, and when we came out of court, Erskine said, "What the devil brings you here, mon,—you spoilt my speech,—I canna afford to be taken off. Did you observe Lord Gillies look at you? I wrote him a caird, and told him to be on his guard as I was, or we should both be upon the stage before supper to-night."

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* That is converting the original Scotchman into an Irishman.—A. M.

C. MATHEWS.

The next letter records a period of extraordinary profit, obtained by most laborious exertion —an unprecedented effort, if his peculiar style of performance be taken into consideration; indeed the account might seem incredible, were it not communicated in such an indisputable form.

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* The late Lord Kinnedder.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Newcastle, Feb. 1st, 1818.

I am delighted to hear that you are at the Laforests', because I think you must be happy there. I would not tell you all my success, because I thought the account I sent you was enough for one gulp. I did not expect to make more than 500*l.* by Glasgow and Edinburgh together. When I arrived I found Glasgow abandoned. I then designed to give for a night my own entertainment; but as the "Actor of All Work" had made such a noise in Scotland, I thought it would not do without it, and I therefore made terms with Murray to play the manager, and take all his door-keepers, &c. The first night overflowed, which induced me to go again; and my share came to 220*l.*, making the whole of my engagement 740*l.*! I have no doubt my profits here will come very near to make up the sum of 900*l.*! What think you of that?

I am pleased at Harry's* attention to you and neglect of me; for if he had treated me well, I think the odds are that I should have been in Lisle-street now, and as much minus as the sum on the other side will now make good. Thank God! I am now in rude health, and have not once been hoarse. I am quite sure no man ever did so much as I have done in three weeks in point of fatigue and exertion of lungs; but I am repaid for all by two expressions of yours, which, believe me, my dear, dear wife, I shall treasure during my life. God bless you.

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* Mr. Henry Harris.—A. M.

C. Mathews.

A chaise is waiting to take me me to Lambton Hall, nine miles from hence. I am going to "sit" to Lord Grey.

In the foregoing letter Mr. Mathews speaks of Mr. Harris's "neglect of him." This refers solely to his professional estimate of his talent while at Covent Garden, which was assuredly a mistaken one, or else he would not have easily yielded to my husband's entreaty to leave him before the term of his articles had expired; no doubt, under the impression that he had tried him "to the top of his bent." But Mr. Harris and himself never ceased to be upon the most cordial terms.

I have already noticed the necessity of removing Charles from his city-school into purer air; and we were fortunate in finding a vacancy in the house of a gentleman * under whose able care the sons of Messrs. Charles Kemble, Young, and Liston were placed.

The following letter alludes to one written at this time by Charles to his father; a surprising composition, as proceeding from a boy. It related to the eventual choice of a profession, the idea of educating him for the church having become a matter of reconsideration.

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* Mr. Richardson.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Newcastle, Feb. 8th, 1818.

I cannot describe to you how delighted I am with Charles's letter. "I could laugh—I could cry." I shall write to him to thank him and praise him.

"The Actor of all Work" is a fortune to me. It is remarkable that I played the Frenchman in France with success—the Scotchman in Scotland, and *Scrawkey* here was a screech from beginning to end.* I am astonished at my own success, I assure you. I have had letters from France, and have been revenged. At Lisle, the porter who took my bribe has been dismissed, and the officer punished. The Marquis knew nothing of it, and has apologised.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

TO MASTER MATHEWS.

Manchester, February 14th, 1818.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Since I received your very clever and entertaining letter, I have been so completely occupied as to be unable to answer it; and even now, having spent the whole of the morning at the theatre, drilling the awkward theatrical squad, it cannot be expected that I can write so good a letter as I ought, in return for one which gave me so much pleasure. As your mother, however, reminded me of my debt to you, and said you were impatient to hear from me, I was determined not to delay any longer the expression of my thanks to you for your letter. I assure you, my dear boy, I felt very proud at the perusal of it; and, like a father, could not be satisfied without the approbation of others. I showed it with triumph to two gentlemen, who were with me at the time I received it; and it was read aloud, "by particular desire," where I dined.

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* In *Scrawkey*, he adopted the Newcastle peculiarity, called the burr.—A. M.

Don't let this make you vain. Proud you may feel that it has been in your power to bestow pleasure on a father who sincerely loves you, and the study of whose life has been to bestow upon you an education of which he flatters himself you are likely to take proper advantage. To see you qualified to move in some respectable profession is now the first object of my heart. I cannot now even venture an opinion as to your future pursuits. It is a matter of serious consideration, and must be left, at all events, till we meet.

I am glad to hear the pony is so well. By the by, you spell it *poney—vouz avez tort.* Don't knock out one of his eyes, but knock out an *e*, next time you write about him.

Adieu! Mon cher Charles. Je vous envoie à mon tour mille et mille remercimens pour votre joli lettre. Vouz pensez bien que je ne fus pas le derniere à l'apprecier. Agreez de recevoir l'expression de ma reconnaissance, qui quoique bien vive ne peut rien ajouter à mon amitié.

Adieu, mon enfant. Je vous embrasse
Bien tendrement,
Charles Mathews.

P.S. To Mrs. Mathews.—Pray write me a letter soon. I am very dull here. This town is a large Leeds, and I don't know a soul. I have a melancholy lodging in a dull street. I opened last night. The house was not great; but they say I shall yet do great things. Heaven send it may be so! but I wish it was over. The theatre is large enough for London. God bless you! Write to a poor, melancholy, deserted wretch.

CHARLES MATHEWS.

Mr. Mathews was involved at this time, as defendant, in a trial arising out of his frequent reliance upon the honesty of *professers*,—one of the results which he experienced in return for his untiring benevolence.* The plaintiff in this trial, whose conduct had excited my husband's inconsiderate resentment, was an attorney, and had been formerly an intimate friend of a Mr. S——; but, as friendship between some men, when interrupted, is converted into the direst hate, these persons became vindictive foes; and when an opportunity appeared for vengeance of real or supposed injury, by the non-payment of money upon application at the usual place, in consequence of Mr. Mathews's absence, and Mr. S——'s carelessness, Mr. Ford was well pleased to avail himself of his power to annoy the staunch friend of the man he hated, though fully aware that he had nothing more to do with the transaction than by lending his name to it, and seeing the claim duly discharged. The inconvenience and disgrace arising from this proceeding he hoped might revert to his enemy. For this reason, and not from any doubt of his losing the money, this person committed one of those acts which the law allows for general security, but of which none, except the lowest practitioners, ever avail themselves. Such are the men who give occasion for the prejudice which many people entertain against lawyers — simply from their experience only of those who are held, by the respectable portion of the profession, at arm's length.

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* This was merely a case of security for another man.

During one of my husband's tours, I had quitted the cottage with my boy, on a Christmas visit in Hertfordshire, and was hastily summoned home by a letter from a confidential servant, apprising me that some men had entered the cottage, and ascertaining that a piano-forte and harp were the only moveables belonging to my husband, (it being a furnished cottage,) they had taken possession of them, and had only consented to remain on the premises one night, in order to give time for the money to be paid, in default of which the property would be taken away for the amount. Of course I returned, much alarmed at such an outrage; but I contrived in a few hours to induce the *gentlemen* to give up for their demand in cash (something under twenty pounds,) what had cost my husband about one hundred and fifty guineas. My account of this on his return home so exasperated him, that he allowed himself no time to cool, but proceeded to Mr. Ford's office at once, in order to express his opinion of his conduct, and in terms which certainly could not be understood as complimentary. Hence arose the action, which was tried during another absence of my husband from home, Mr. Ford having secured the able advocacy of Mr. Scarlett;* while our excellent and eloquent friend, Mr. Adolphus, with his wonted alacrity, gave his talents (literally *gave* them, for his professional services to my husband were always gratuitous,) and defended the action. There was nothing remarkable in Mr. Scarlett's opening of the case (for he felt that he was on the weak side); all he could do was to lay a stress upon the extensive weight a man of Mr. Mathews's celebrity gave to his report of others. He averred that it was better to be held in disesteem by any man than by an actor, quoting in support of his assertion the words of our great poet, who had said—"After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their (*i. e.* players') ill report while you live."

To this Mr. Adolphus replied, in a concise statement of the provocation, which he interspersed with the most witty and apposite illustrations. The following account gives the result:—

> One Ford, an attorney, brought an action against Mr. Mathews, for entering his house, and calling him "a scoundrel, a rascal, and a disgrace to his profession." It appeared that Mr. Mathews had become security for the payment of an annuity; and that during his absence in France the plaintiff levied an execution on his goods for the amount thereof, to the serious alarm and inconvenience of Mrs. Mathews, who had received no intimation of the

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* The present Lord Abinger.

intended procedure. The foreman of the jury inquired what were the smallest damages that would not carry costs, and being informed 40*s.*, the jury found a verdict for the plaintiff—1*s.* damages, and 1*s.* costs.

It happened somewhat curiously, that the Lord Chief Justice (Ellenborough) whom my husband, it will be recollected, imitated in "Love, Law, and Physic," presided at this trial. Possibly his Lordship remembered the circumstance of the defendant's former imitation of his manner while making his present charge to the jury. But if he did recollect, it certainly did not influence him in the discharge of his judicial duty.

He who so often cast his own difficulties upon the shoulders of his too generous friend, left England shortly afterwards with a large sum, (in addition to his previous debt to my husband,) supplied by the kindness of Mr. Mathews, in consideration of his amiable wife and family, and in order to enable him to take possession of a lucrative situation abroad, whence he never remitted a single shilling to his benefactor, or attempted to acquit himself of the responsibilities under which he had left him. Besides that of the present case, and a considerable sum of money lent, Mr. Mathews had become security for him to a mercantile house, which bond he basely declared to have been cancelled when questioned about it previously to his departure. It was for this man's debt that my husband had been arrested while upon his crutches at Brighton; but such was his plausibility, that his friend still believed him to be the amiable person he seemed; and it was painful to Mr. Mathews, independently of pecuniary losses sustained by him, to find him so utterly unworthy.

The annuity my husband continued to pay for some years after Mr. S—— had left it upon his hands, when a legal friend advised him to buy it up: so that, after paying between seventy and eighty pounds annually for nearly eight years, Mr. Mathews expended several hundred more in order to cancel this periodical and harassing disbursement.

When the report of this trial reached Dublin, my husband happened to be performing there, and was congratulated on the verdict, which, though legally against him, was in fact a triumph. After he quitted Ireland, the following appeared in Dublin:—

> "We are now happy to acquaint our readers that Mr. Mathews, during his late visit to this city, made a considerable addition to his private friends, who, taking into consideration that he is at present without any settled means of livelihood, being engaged at neither of the winter theatres, with that liberality which ever characterises the lovers of the drama, entered into a voluntary subscription of *one penny* each, in order to defray the *enormous amount* which has been awarded against him. The subscription, we understand, is now filled up, and the *two shillings* sterling remitted to Mr. Mathews by the hands of one of the principal banking and commercial houses of this town."

CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Mathews's engagement with Mr. Arnold. — His visit to Paris with that gentleman. — Letter to Mrs. Mathews from Paris.—Tiercelin, Brunet, and Potier.—Invitation to Mr. Mathews's "At Home."— Programme of the entertainment. — Mr. Mathews's introductory address.—Extraordinary success of the speculation.—Mr. Mathews's sudden illness.—Mr. Arnold and his bond.—Amelioration of the agreement.—Distressing malady.—Mr. Mathews and M. Alexandre.

I HAVE already observed, that to Mr. Arnold belonged the judgment to perceive the advantage to be derived from the individual exertions of Mr. Mathews. Mr. Arnold's discrimination and shrewdness led to the conclusion, which Mr. Mathews had never calculated upon to any such extent; indeed, he was ill at calculation in any shape. Mr. Arnold had, in fact, prudently laid by for the time, which he saw approaching, from my husband's evident dissatisfaction with the winter theatres; and when it came, promptly offered him a remedy for present discontent, and a security from similar mortification in future. Briefly, Mr. Arnold proposed to buy up for a term of years Mr. Mathews's talents, and to become sole master and comptroller of them; to take all chances and risks; and, what was most tempting to my husband, *all the trouble!* Strange to say, Mr. Mathews thought he could be satisfied and happy under such a servitude. But he had a bad head for business: and Mr. Arnold enjoined secrecy; even *I* was not to be admitted into their conferences; and all was listened to on the one side without any clear understanding of his obligations. The income, and the employment of his powers, were all, as it afterwards proved, that Mr. Mathews retained of the conditions. He was disgusted with his late position, and, what he could not but feel, the injustice of the winter managers. He panted for freedom, fancied it was now offered to him, and heedlessly rushed into tenfold captivity.

When too late for objection or interference, I was told what he had done: sold himself for the most valuable part of his public life to a person who originally, by his objectionable management of the Lyceum (as Mr. Mathews conceived it), drove him from London; but, under his present excitement against others, all this had been overlooked or forgotten. Reproaches on my part were as useless as they would have been unkind; the arrangement was made, and, as far as *honour* was concerned, past recall; he had pledged his word to Mr. Arnold. A trivial circumstance recurred to me, and was now explained, which at the time caused me a slight surprise and some offence. It was on the *first* appointment (as it afterwards appeared) made by the parties. I had engaged, by my husband's wish, to accompany some friends to a concert: he refused to go; the carriage was late, and Mr. Arnold was punctual. I wondered at his call at such an hour, especially as no intimacy subsisted. He fixed his eyes upon the lights in the room for a moment, and taking a pinch of snuff, as if out of humour, asked, or rather exclaimed, in a sharp tone, "What! do you burn wax candles?—a great extravagance!" I started at the liberty I conceived he took, without answering him. "A feather will show which way the wind blows." Our future master was calculating, that with the reductions his plan would require in our mode of living, it would be necessary to give up all refinements.

As soon as I was assured that the matter was irrevocably determined upon, and that my husband's time, previously to the arrangement coming into action, was to be spent in a tour, I persuaded him to let me begin our contracted system at once, to give up our carriage and servants, and allow me to take a small furnished cottage near my boy's school, at least till the result of Mr. Arnold's experiment was ascertained, which was to take place in the spring of the next year. In agreement with this proposal, I removed from Lisle-street to the Clapham-road cottage. Having settled all preliminaries for commencing the new scheme, Mr. Arnold and my husband made a short visit to Paris, where Mr. Mathews had never been.

TO MRS. MATHEWS.

Paris, March 12th, 1818.

I arrived here safely yesterday, and as soon as we had dined, went with Poole, who found us out within an hour of our arrival, to the Theatre des Variétés, where I saw three of the finest actors I have ever beheld, Tiercelin, Brunet, and Potier.

To-day we have been walking about to see the palaces and principal public buildings. You have heard so much from various visiters, who are naturally full of communication on these topics, that it is not possible I can say anything new. I am lost in wonder. The Tuileries palace and gardens, and all the better parts of this most magnificent city, far exceed my most sanguine expectation; the immense population, the extraordinary "gigs" that are to be encountered at every corner, keep both eyes in a constant rotatory motion, and all the risible faculties in unceasing exertion. The most public walks, particularly those of the Palais Royal, being a mixture of Exeter Change and Vauxhall Gardens on a gala night, present such a ridiculous mixture of character and costume, that you cannot divest your mind of the idea that they are walking in masquerade dresses. I have seen one hundred men to-day exactly like the mask Liston wore at Charles Kemble's; and the coal-scuttle Grimaldi wore in the pantomime is no caricature of the women's head-dresses. We saw Gavardin, whom Poole described as a most enchanting comic actress. One scene excelled anything I have seen in England, as far as Covent Garden excels Drury-lane. Potier convulsed me with laughter; his face is a very comic consumptive likeness of Young in "The Stranger;" and he played *Werter* in burlesque.

Arnold and I had a dinner to-day of three dishes — a bottle of claret, and another of burgundy; and our bill was 8*s*. 2*d*. English.

C. Mathews.

P. S.—I dine to-day at Talma's.

Towards the end of March the following simple announcement heralded Mr. Mathews's first attempt to face the town single-handed.

The public are respectfully informed that Mr. Mathews will be "At Home," at the Theatre Royal English Opera House, on the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, and 11th of April. Particulars of the Entertainments to which the Public are invited will be duly announced.

The title given to this "Invitation" was a most felicitous one as it turned out, but was undoubtedly open to many critical taunts, had the entertainment happened to be less fortunate. The public expectation was strongly excited; the house was filled at an early hour; and the following bill, delivered at the entrance, was eagerly perused during the overture, performed by *one* musician on a piano-forte placed on one side of the stage. The preparations that met the eye of the expectants, were simply a drawing-room scene, a small table covered with a green cloth, a chair behind it, and a lamp placed at either end.

Without further appliances, or means of dramatic effect, the performer came forward in his private dress, as he would have entered any evening party. His reception was enthusiastic. The following is a copy of the bill.

Theatre Royal, English Opera House, Strand.

The public are respectfully informed, that they will find Mr. Mathews "At Home," this evening, Thursday, April 2nd, 1818; Saturday the 4th, and on the Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday following, when he will have the honour of presenting his visiters with an Entertainment called

MAIL-COACH ADVENTURES,

Affording an introduction for various comic songs, imitations, &c. Previous to which he will address the company on the subject of his present attempt.

PART FIRST.

Recitation — Introductory Address, general improvement in the conveyance of live lumber, as exemplified in the progress of heavy coach, light coach, caterpillar, and mail. — Whimsical description of an expedition to Brentford.

Song — Mail-coach.

Recitation — Description of the passengers. — Lisping Lady and Critic in black.

Song — Royal Visiters.

Recitation — Breaking of a spring. — Passengers at Highgate.—Literary Butcher.—Socrates in the Shambles. — Definition of Belles Lettres. — French Poets. — Rhyming defended.

Song — Cobbler à la Francaise.

Recitation — Theatrical conversation. — Dimensions of

Drury-lane and Covent Garden stages. — Matter-of-fact conversation; satire on truisms.

Song — Incontrovertible Facts in various branches of Knowledge.

PART SECOND.

Mr. Mathews will deliver an Experimental Lecture on Ventriloquy.

PART THIRD.

Recitation — Digression on the study of the Law: whimsical trial, Goody Grim *versus* Lapstone. — Scramble at Supper. — Drunken Farmer. — Extract from Hippisley's drunken man.

Song — London Newspapers.

Recitation — Imitation of Fond Barney of York. — Arrival of a Scotch Lady.—Long story about nothing.

Song — Bartholomew Fair.

Recitation —A Quack Doctor.—Mountebank's harangue. —Anecdote of a Yorkshireman.

Song — The Nightingale Club.

The Entertainment to conclude with novel specimens of Imitation, in which several tragic and comic performers will give their different ideas how "Hamlet's advice to the Players" should be spoken.

Of this first attempt, the notices published at the time contain a more perfect account than any I could now give. This first performance, though composed of materials which had been presented to the public during the previous ten years, was hailed in a collected form with great delight, and its success may be considered a greater triumph of his skill and versatile powers than all he afterwards did, even with the advantage of novelty. The following was Mr. Mathews's Introductory Address.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Appearing before you in this novel way, it will naturally be expected that I should give some explanation of the motive that has induced me to make so bold an attempt as that of offering you a whole evening's entertainment by my own individual exertions. It is simply this:—public approbation has long since flattered me into the belief, that I have some pretensions to the title of a comic actor. The vanity of mankind is easily roused by the encouragement of popular applause; and I am not aware that actors, though *proverbially modest*, are more exempt from vanity than patriots and statesmen. Fully gratified in this particular, it has therefore been my highest ambition to appear before you in the legitimate shape of a regular comedian. Circumstances, however, which I could neither control nor account for, have deprived me of the opportunity of so doing. In the mean time, I have frequently been urged by my friends to attempt an entertainment by myself, and reminded with what success the celebrated Dibdin had, during several winters, kept audiences together by his single exertions. Still I preferred the exercise of my profession as a member of the national theatre; and could I have been indulged in the first wish of my heart, that of appearing frequently before you in characters of legitimate comedy, in that capacity I should, probably, have remained to the end of my days, without ever attempting to exhibit that little knack for distinct mimicry to which I since have unfortunately been exclusively doomed.

In the latter part of my last winter's engagement it became evident to me, that all hopes of attaining my favourite object were at an end. I scarcely ever had the opportunity of appearing before you, but in characters solely devoted to the peculiarities of mimicry. The press, perhaps unconsciously, took its tone from the managers; and a part of it, (I do not say the whole, for I should be ungrateful if I did,) but a part fell into the habit of designating me as a mere mimic, and no actor. It will, however, be observed, that the best authorities have characterized the drama by the title of the mimic art; and I humbly conceive, that, without mimicry, there can be no acting. It is the very essence of personation, and he who cannot personate the character imagined by an author, in my mind can never be an actor. If this argument, which I have presumed to advance, be admitted, it is surely a strange deduction, that a man ceases to be an actor, because he personates half a dozen characters in a drama instead of one. Be this as it may, such has been the opinion given in my particular case. The public naturally supposed the peculiarities of my cast of characters to be my own taste. I therefore hope I shall be excused for taking this my only opportunity of avowing my firm attachment to that legitimate drama of the country, which I devoutly hope may one day be restored to us.

I trust it is clearly understood, that I have spoken not of *motives*, but of *effects*. I have not the slightest disposition to attribute my treatment to any illiberal feeling. It was probably accidental, but the facts are undeniable, and the results to me the same as if they had been premeditated. During the last season, which consisted of two hundred and thirty-nine nights, I had only the opportunity of appearing forty-six, and not once in a character in a comedy. It is true that twelve nights of those forty-six I rode one of the finest horses the stud of the theatre could afford;* but even this, though I certainly was *exalted* by it, did not satisfy my ambition. During the rest of the time, to make use of a theatrical term, I was laid upon the shelf: but I was too fond of my profession and public applause to lie quietly there. I grew restless and fidgetty, and like a good soldier, who feels he has not yet done half his duty, whenever I peeped from my uneasy quarters, and saw a muster of the dramatic corps—

> "My soul was in arms, and eager for the fray;"

in which I might prove my zeal and my devotion in your service. But this was not permitted. At length I suspected my services were not required at all; and therefore, "Like a well-bred dog, who walks quietly down stairs when he sees violent preparations on foot for kicking him into the street," I followed the example of my betters, and resigned, rather than run the risk of staying to be turned out. I retired. It was my own act. I complain of no one. I only assert my right to make use of whatever talent may have been bestowed on me to the best advantage to myself: for if I can only be allowed to exhibit those talents in a national theatre, which I once wished to be confined to the amusement of my private friends; if I cannot be allowed my chance, like other actors, in the usual way; if the regular practitioners will drive me to quackery, why, I will sell my medicines on my own account, and they shall call me mountebank if they like; but if such I am, like one, I will have a stage to myself. My vanity, if they please, has led me to make the attempt. It is a bold one, but the encouragement is in your hands. If I can stand single-handed against the hosts of superior entertainment by which I am surrounded, it will be a feather in my cap. It is in your power to place the feather there; and if it is once planted, be assured it shall be worn gratefully, as well as triumphantly. I feel, however, considerable anxiety for the result, and unaffectedly acknowledge my fearful diffidence of my own abilities. The difficulties of my task are so numerous and obvious, that were I a stranger in the land, I should abandon it in despair; but when I look round me, and reflect on the numerous instances of kindness I have received, gratitude for past favours, and zeal to merit new ones, conspire to banish those apprehensions which an undertaking like mine had so naturally excited; and I enter on my task without more apology, or further adding to a preface, which, I fear, has already too long encroached upon your patience.

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* Mr. Harris had introduced horses into the drama of "Lodoiska," in which Mr. Mathews performed *Varbel.*—A. M.

The following are the contemporary notices of this performance, which ought to find a place here.

Mr. Mathews, pursuant to the notice he had given to the public, was yesterday evening "At Home" at the English Opera House; and like other distinguished personages, when they make similar announcements, was visited by a most numerous company, who filled every part of the house, but whose gratification was far superior to any that has ever been experienced at the fashionable squeezes at the west end of the town. In other words, Mr. Mathews, unsupported by any other actor, and depending solely on his own powers, presented to his audience a series of entertainments, which excited continual peals of laughter from the beginning to the end. The attempt would have been hazardous, and probably abortive in any other person; but in this instance it was crowned with complete and brilliant success, such as no individual has met with since the days of George Alexander Stevens. His imagination has taken a range over the whole extent of common life; and his sportive humour has fastened upon every part from which ridicule and mirth could be elicited. He presented a group of pictures which, while they partook of all the pleasantry of caricature, may be considered as accurate descriptions of nature. Such is the general character of those entertainments called "Mail-coach Adventures," with which Mr. Mathews surprised and delighted the public yesterday evening, and which consisted chiefly of comic songs, recitations, and imitations.

Everything was given with an airiness, a taste, and an epigrammatic conciseness, which prevented it from hanging heavy on the auditor even for a single moment. The novelty of the evening was ventriloquism; in the exhibition of which, five distinct persons were heard to speak, as if they were actually before the audience, while all the voices came from one and the same person; and this was Mr. Mathews himself. In the character of a French valet, which he sustained with characteristic naïveté and humour, he alternately held a conversation with a little child, with a house-keeper, a butler, and his master. The child was represented by a doll, which he took out of a box; and one would have thought the doll actually spoke, so well did he by his ventriloquial power imitate the voice of a child, without any movement of the natural organs of speech. He sang a song on the London Newspapers, which abounded with humour and satire. He next delineated a Yorkshire clown in a most natural manner, and afterwards, in a strain of exquisite mimicry, personated an old Scotch lady, who told a long story about nothing. He concluded the whole with a perfect imitation of several eminent performers of the present day. The passage he selected for the purpose was a part of Hamlet's instructions to the players. He began by mimicing the exact tones, accents, and gestures of Mr. Kemble in this part; and afterwards described the manner in which it would be spoken by Young, Talma, Pope, Cooke, Munden, Blanchard, Fawcett, &c.

We never witnessed any exhibition at which the audience seemed to feel so much unmixed and uninterrupted pleasure. It was altogether a delicious treat, because it made everybody merry and happy.

The examination of a Jew witness was inimitable; and the imitations of two celebrated counsel and a judge, were perfectly recognised. In the supper-room of the coach company, a drunken farmer makes his appearance; he has laid a wager to snuff out and light a candle; and Mathews went through his drunken drollery with strict, yet most whimsical resemblance. The mention of news brought in numberless puns and plays upon the names of the principal papers, and a song; after this came in quick succession, "Bartholomew Fair," the celebrated "Nightingale Club," and imitations of the chief English actors. The most chaste, and for that reason the finest and most difficult performance of the night, was "The Long Story about nothing," the narrative of an old Scotch woman, detailing a trivial incident, but with matchless adherence to the primitiveness of the parson's wife, the old Scotch dissenter, the old woman, with her gentle loquaciousness and her interjectional piety. Mathews had, by some expeditious changes, dressed himself for the external resemblance; but with the face he seemed also to put on the mind. This appeared to us the most complete adoption of a character, the most perfect identification of one being with another, we had ever seen.

Mr. Mathews's performances are without parallel; at least we can say that nothing of the kind which we ever saw comes near the excellence of his imitations and his versatile talent.

There is something in good mimicry which affords great delight. It resembles humorous satire: it levels the most lofty, and lashes the most ridiculous. It is perhaps not attributable to one of the kindest principles in the human mind, that mankind are so much amused with the display of his art, for all enjoy it except the person who is said to be taken off. Yet it is but fair to observe, that in Mr. Mathews's imitations there is no ill-nature. The peculiarities of men and of nations are exquisitely represented, and so little caricatured, that if ever an individual could bear to see his own or his country's distinguishing features made a subject for laughter, we think he must even join in the risibility which the efforts of this admirable mimic excite. We were heartily amused with them, and laughed three hours by St. Martin's clock at the changes, personations, drollery, songs, and ventriloquy of which they were composed.

The Entertainment consists of a description of passengers, and adventures met with in a mail-coach, and a lecture on ventriloquy. The former commences with remarks on the various kinds of coaches — heavy coach, light coach, &c. His companions in the mail are a surly critic, a loquacious Frenchman, and a lisping lady, who prefers talking nonsense to not talking at all. Those who are acquainted with the richness of humour which Mathews possesses, and his inimitable mimical talents, will be able to form some conception of the amusement which these promising objects afford in his hands.

The journey commences northward. The *Critic* is reserved and silent, the *Frenchman* indefatigable in his attempts to draw him into conversation, and at last proves partially successful. The breaking of a spring, however, interrupts their discourse, and detains the passengers for some time at Highgate, where we are introduced to a literary butcher, who has a particular fondness for reading the history of England, and whose blunders and anachronisms are most ludicrous. The spring at length is repaired, and the passengers proceed on their journey. A laughable dialogue now ensues on the comparative merit of the French and English drama. The Frenchman defends rhyming tragedies, and expresses his extreme admiration of English rhyme, as a specimen of which he favour sthe company with the old song, " A Cobbler there was," every rhyme of which he contrives to mar in the following ingenious manner :—

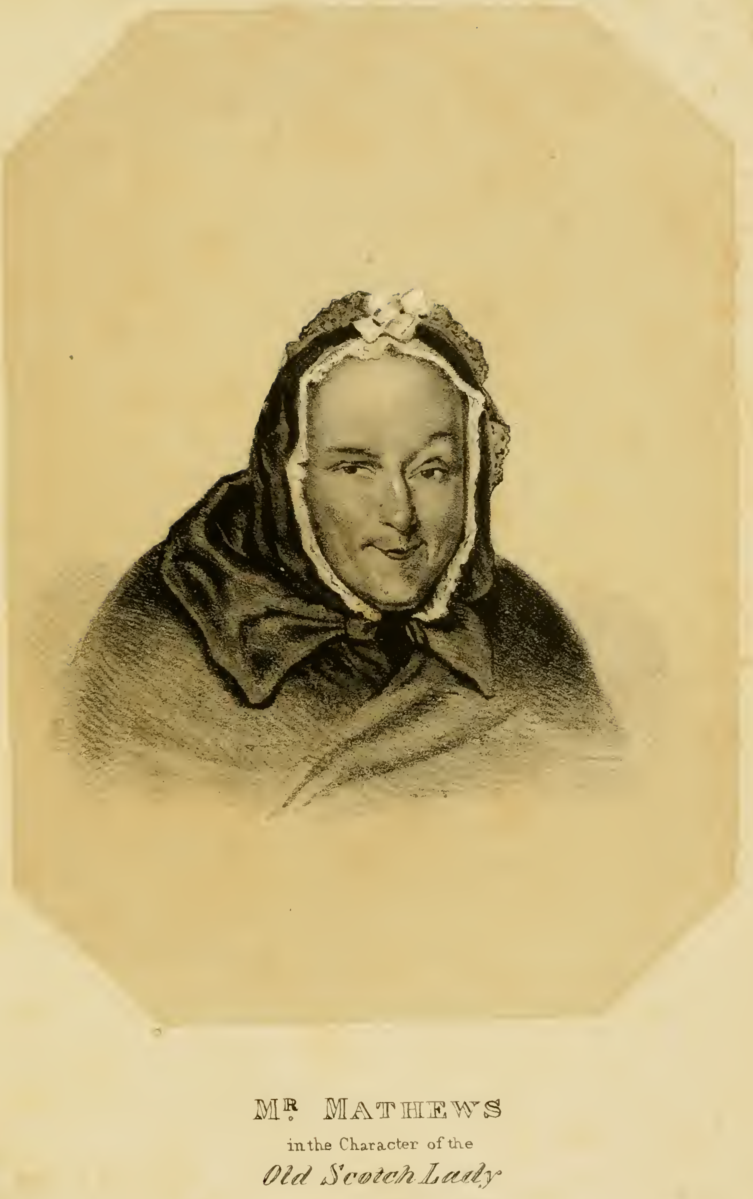
> " A cobbler there was, and he lived in a stall
> Which served him for parlour, for kitchen,
> And—everything."

Imitations of Talma and Hullin are now introduced, and the discourse then turns upon the stages of Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The *Critic* declaims violently against the enormous modern theatres, and the *Lisping Lady* now joins in the conversation, with a string of truisms, which arouse his spleen. The First part concludes with a song on " Incontrovertible Facts."

The Second Part consists of a lecture on ventriloquy, which is perhaps the most surprising portion of the entertainment. The scene discovers a bed, which is supposed to contain a gentleman who, under the influence of the spleen and blue devils, always fancies himself dangerously ill. Mathews enters as his French valet. Presently he hears the voice of his child: he looks about, and at length takes from a box beneath the table a large doll, dressed up as a boy. He angrily demands, why he got there? "Oh," says the child, "I wanted to see you perform, and so *I took a box*." The dialogue is carried on between these two with great humour, till the hypochondriac awakes, and calls for his dinner. Mrs. Slop, the housekeeper, and Mr. Cork, the butler, also join in the conversation; and the quickness with which Mathews adapts his voice to the different characters, shifting it about from place to place, is truly astonishing. This Part concludes with a duett, sung by Mathews, alternately with the whole of the imaginary characters.

In the Third Part, the Mail-coach Adventures are resumed. A whimsical description of a trial is introduced, in which the damage done by a pig is the subject of litigation between a superannuated cobbler and Goody Grim. The cross-examination of a Jew pedlar respecting the "unclean animal" is the very height of ludicrous burlesque. An admirable satire upon newspaper puffs, second edition, &c. is given, succeeded by cross-readings. The richest bit, however, remains to be noticed. This is a long story about nothing, told by an old Scotch lady. Mathews here puts on a shawl and a cap, and so completely assumes the appearance of an old woman that the deception is perfect. This is certainly the most admirable assumption of character we ever yet beheld.

These are but a few of the subjects which are touched upon in the course of the performance. A number of



MR. MATHEWS
in the Character of the
Old Scotch Lady
as represented by him when
AT HOME
"it's just a leetle Anecdote".

his most admired songs are interspersed, as "The Nightingale Club," "The Mail-coach," &c., which serve to vary the entertainment very delightfully. It concludes with imitations of the principal performers, which are admirable. Those of Fawcett, Munden, Incledon, Young, and others, are inimitable.

This was, indeed, an unprecedented instance of individual success. The crowds that nightly flocked to witness the performance seemed scarcely to lessen the number of hourly applicants for places: not a day passed without many private entreaties from persons who were disappointed in procuring places at the box-office, to Mr. Mathews, to *contrive* that they should be accommodated, as if the theatre had been elastic, and could be stretched at pleasure for their gratification. Innumerable letters from all ranks of persons were addressed to my husband to obtain admittance. The following owes its preservation to its being kept as an autograph of a celebrated person.

24, Bury-street, St. James's,
Tuesday, April 30th, 1818.

My dear Sir,

I am here but for a short time, and have set apart Thursday for the very great treat of hearing you at the Lyceum; but as they tell me it will be next to impossible to find places without having before secured a box, I presume so far on my acquaintance with you as to beg your interest for *three* seats *somewhere*. My friend Mr. Irving (the author of "The Sketch-Book,") is one of those that accompany me.

Yours very truly, Thomas Moore.

Here, then, was the result of Mr. Arnold's calculation. For my own part, I felt stunned with the blow, for such it seemed to our future happiness. The wondrous success of the night spoke loudly to me of my husband's imprudence and precipitancy; and while our friends came one after another to my box to congratulate me, and bring me cheering messages from others, I hardly knew how to separate my real satisfaction at the popularity of Mr. Mathews from the depressing recollection that the most solid result of his success was for the benefit almost of a stranger; and when I greeted him, upon our return home, it would have been curious to an observer to see our manner to each other, which might have been said to resemble the twofold expression of the ingenious French grimacer, the one half of whose face laughed while the other cried. This was really the case, for we rejoiced and mourned at one and the same time.

However, we agreed to remain in our little cottage, and tried to be content. The next day Mr. Mathews felt ill; but he rallied, and reappeared a second night, with the same results. He came home sick and feverish; but again and again he performed his task, and the appetite of the town seemed to grow "by what it fed on;" the demand for places nightly exceeded the number to be obtained; and Mr. Arnold's anxiety augmented at this extraordinary popularity of his project, lest it should be known that he was the principal gainer by it; and he cautioned me frequently not to betray the secret, for, as he suggested, it was possible that the public would feel disappointed to find Mr. Mathews not the principal person benefited by his performance. All this was painful, and bitterly did we feel the numerous congratulations we received upon the speedy fortune that must accrue from such a source. Mr. Mathews, however, resolutely went on, ill as he felt, determined to abide the result of his own rashness, reasonably and honourably reflecting, that as Mr. Arnold had taken all the risk, he had fairly a right to the profit arising from the success of his speculation.

It was my original intention, as it was my earnest wish, to remain silent upon the subject of my husband's engagement to Mr. Arnold; for to touch upon it even slightly was a very painful effort to me on many accounts, and I should have passed over the whole transaction, had it not been pointed out to me as a duty to the memory of my husband, paramount to every other consideration, to confute the universal belief of his having made a prodigious sum of money in this the first, and the six following seasons, of his "At Homes." This was a very natural impression, from the well-known great receipts consequent upon the performance. At the period of which I speak, while he was receiving the congratulations of all his friends at the rapid fortune he was accumulating, he was inwardly regretting the too humble estimate of his own powers, which had led him into the mistake of binding himself as a servant where he ought to have been the master. When Mr. Mathews first stood singly before the public—when the building in which he performed almost groaned under the weight of spectators—when he who attracted them was supposed by his individual merit, his unremitting mental and bodily toil, to be receiving a proportionate reward for his unparalleled exertions, he was, in fact, a poorer man than he had found himself for many years.

I shall content myself with this assertion: the evidences are in my possession, and I earnestly desire to commit them to oblivion; but I cannot forget the deep anguish my dear husband felt for his incautious, unadvised precipitancy, in devoting to another what he too late felt should have chiefly benefited his family, for he thought not of himself. He repented the step for ever afterwards, although he never suffered his bad bargain to lead him willingly into any neglect of the interest of the person whose fortune he was making during the long period he was so bound. It was harassing, however, to find his means constantly overrated, for the fallacy of his enormous receipts affected him in various ways during the rest of his life; he was always, therefore, annoyed when told of his vast possessions, for he was said to be worth more money than he ever earned.* In this extravagant estimate of his riches, no allowance was thought of for his living, the education of his son, and other necessary as well as incidental expenses. The simple fact of his standing alone before the public for so many years, naturally enough led to this false conclusion; but those who held up their hands with admiration at the immense fortune he was making, were unacquainted with the main fact of his situation with Mr. Arnold, and the requisite expenses and drawbacks that attended his individual performances, when he travelled for his own profit. When he made a tour in the provinces his expenses were excessive; he was compelled to take assistants, servants, carriages, machinery, pianoforte, wardrobe, &c.; and when he could not spare time to travel with his own horses, (a not inexpensive plan,) he had ruinous posting to pay. Inn-bills were of no trivial amount for four persons (himself, his managing man, musician, and servant); hiring and preparing rooms and theatres, with their appendages, demanded a heavy disbursement, for advantage was taken, under the dishonest reckoning that his superior receipts warranted every encroachment upon them; when other applicants were charged five guineas for a room or a theatre, Mr. Mathews was frequently required to pay twelve or fourteen. I remember as an instance of this, that once when his managing man went forward to secure a small theatre for his performance, the demand was three guineas per night for its use; but, upon being made acquainted for whom it was to be engaged, he was immediately informed by the agent that when Mr. ——, the proprietor left orders for letting it, he desired that should Mr. Mathews happen to apply, it must not be let to *him* under *nine!**

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* In more than one instance he was believed to possess a "*plum.*"

But to return. One day a gentleman, who was on habits of great intimacy with my husband, finding his hearty congratulations upon his prospect of realising a speedy fortune produce no satisfaction, suspected that something was withheld which rendered them unwelcome; and feeling a real interest in the prosperity of our family, he at length drew a confidential admission of discontent, and a partial revelation of the circumstances in which he was placed. He then delivered up to his legal friend's investigation the heart of his mystery, by producing the fatal parchment; and, strange to say, from this accidental inspection Mr. Mathews first became thoroughly acquainted with the whole extent of his obligations. I have no apology to offer for a manifest and censurable indiscretion, but my husband's inborn and unfortunate hatred to the formalities of business. In the present case, when the time arrived for final settlement, he did not feel the necessity of inspecting the document offered to his scrutiny—but rashly and hastily affixed his name to it—impatient to enter a chaise then waiting to convey him to Dover, and into which he hastened with his future master in high spirits; and away went this fettered slave, without considering the weight and quality of his chains, or how they were calculated to oppress and gall him when in action.

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* The proprietor of a large room at Worcester once wrote to Mr. Mathews to come there and perform, and offered him his place and one-fifth of the receipts for his performance. This application was almost too impudent even to laugh at.

The terms of this extraordinary document, its pains and penalties, reduced my husband to the very verge of phrenzy when they were made clear to him by his legal friend, whose judgment and advice in the first instance, had not secrecy been the basis of the negotiation, must have preserved him from this enthralment. The extent of his imprudence and misfortune then reached his comprehension, and despair seized upon every faculty. It was in vain that he had resolved on performing his duty to his employer—he had not till now an idea of its extent. He knew he had resigned the greater part of his profits to another, but he had no understanding of what was exacted besides. Indeed the clauses that existed in this bond were of the most extraordinary nature. By one of them it was exacted that my husband should not only work all the year round for Mr.

Arnold, but be subservient to his discretionary power to command him to go to any part of Great Britain, Ireland, or the Continent he chose to specify, and to exert his talents wheresoever, and in whatever manner, Mr. Arnold conceived it expedient to his own interest to command their exercise. In another part it was insisted, that upon any occasion of absence or failure of his expected performance, or from whatever cause, (*personal illness excepted,*) Mr. Mathews was on each and every omission to forfeit the sum of two hundred pounds; so that the inference was, that in the event of any family affliction, the loss of wife, child, or any other calamity, it was not to interfere with his duty to his master.

In short, the reading of the parchment acted like a stroke of thunder upon my husband; he had, as I have said, been suffering from the effects of his unusual fatigue, and the reflections which would obtrude, in spite of himself, upon his mistaken estimate of his own strength with the public; and the shock of this iron manacle, of which he now felt the entire pressure for the first time, caused a delirium to seize upon him, and he was put to bed at a friend's house in town, utterly incapacitated from all thought or action.

On the first intimation of Mr. Mathews's situation and inability to perform, a medical gentleman, a stranger to us, called " from Mr. Arnold, to examine into Mr. Mathews's state of health !"

He found my husband somewhat better as to bodily ailment, but in that state of mental prostration, that it must have been clear to the physician he was quite unfitted for his required task; but his office was to pronounce whether bodily disease was the cause of the non-performance of his engagement. Immediately after his report, Mr. Arnold sent in a legal demand for 200*l.*, which demand was repeated on every occasion of failure on the appointed night to appear at the English Opera House. At these aggravating results of his position the delirium returned: in vain were Mr. Arnold's forfeitures, — my poor husband's mind was overthrown, and mine little less distracted. Mr. Arnold at length, by my desire, came himself in order to examine into the fact of my husband's disability to obey his wishes, and he then saw the utter folly of expecting the sufferer to return to his duties. Our friends gathered around us; a party of them visited and conferred with Mr. Arnold, and gradually induced him to admit the necessity as well as policy of waiving in part the hard conditions of his bond; for the question was whether he should relax a little, and resign a part, rather than by his tenacity lose the whole of the golden harvest he had sowed. My husband's friends were strenuously persevering, and pointed out that, unless Mr. Arnold did something that would allow my husband to prosecute his duties with a more tranquil feeling, it must end in the defeat of his own hopes altogether. He was induced to listen to self-interest. Certain conditions were then rescinded, others modified, and the pecuniary severity of the agreement ameliorated. Mr. Arnold's claims upon the personal exertions of my husband were confined to London, leaving him the other months to work out his time for his own exclusive profit in the provinces.

Another agreement was made out, in which the engagement was to be limited to seven seasons; Mr. Mathews being at liberty, as I have said, to perform in the country at the annual close of his London "At Home."* This partial release, when made clear, acted gradually and in a salutary manner upon my husband's mind and returning health; he was able to resume his public duties soon after, and from that moment he proceeded cheerfully and zealously to perform his undertaking. Only a few intimate friends, those who had exerted themselves to bring about this alleviation to his bondage, knew the real cause of the interruption of his performance. Mr. Mathews never met Mr. Arnold, or communicated with him during the time of discontent,—nor, I believe, did they ever, at any time during their future knowledge of each other, revert to the painful subject. My husband went steadily on without shrinking from his task, or showing the least ill-will towards his taskmaster. Neither was he ever known to obtrude his natural regrets upon any one, that he had given up the best part of his life to enrich another.

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* Mr. Arnold, it was calculated, made by this speculation thirty thousand pounds, independently of after arrangements with Mr. Mathews, also of a highly lucrative nature.

In a few weeks after these harassing struggles, my husband found an occasional inconvenience that he had lately felt, augmented to a most serious disorder, from which his eventual sufferings were truly pitiable. I can only describe it by saying that it showed itself in deep cracks across his tongue. Every advice was sought and attended to; but it baffled the first-rate skill and experience. It sometimes prevented him from eating, and banished sleep, and had he not been resolute in the prosecution of his duty, he must have declared it (as his medical men did) impossible to use it professionally. Every word he uttered was like a drop of aqua-fortis upon these cracks. It was distressing to know his exertions under such torture,—and, oh! how painful now to remember them. This complaint had in turn been pronounced to be *stomach* and *local fever*, caused by anxiety and his great professional exertions. Some days it was better, at others worse, according to the use made of his voice; but it was always in a state which would have warranted him in declaring acting too painful to be attempted; still he persevered, and it was heart-touching to witness his sufferings on his return home from the exertion. On the days of performance he often found it requisite to preserve a total silence until he began his "Entertainment," when he described his sensations to be like what he must be supposed to feel while talking and singing with a piece of red-hot iron attached to his tongue.

I have had occasion to marvel upon the unreasonable propositions and expectations of professional people in certain cases, and their total blindness at such times to everything but self-interest. I remember at this period a very striking instance of the sort occurred in the personal application of a Monsieur Alexandre, a gentleman who, during my husband's success in his first "At Home," was exhibiting specimens of ventriloquy at the Adelphi Theatre in his own language. This gentleman was one night ushered, unannounced, into my husband's dressing-room, at the close of the performance, and after introducing himself by name, proceeded to say that he had been one of the audience that night, and was much struck with the *second act* of Mr. Mathews's entertainment, (that where the characters took a dramatic shape,) which he thought he could perform himself with great effect. He then had the singular modesty and good taste to request a copy of it for his own purpose at the Adelphi! In reply to this, Mr. Mathews with truth assured him, that he had not studied it from a manuscript, but arranged the whole in his own mind, and had never written it down. The applicant was somewhat staggered at this, but soon after remodelled his request, and proposed that Mr. Mathews should write out the piece for him, translating it, as he proceeded, into French, which would be more desirable for his immediate study! Mr. Mathews (with some difficulty) convinced Monsieur Alexandre that he could not oblige him, on the plea that his time was too much engaged to admit of his employing his pen: and Monsieur finding his "slight acquaintance" preparing to undress without further remark, reluctantly took the hint, and bowed himself out, evidently much chagrined, and doubtless very much disgusted with the English *bête.*

Monsieur Alexandre was a man of very effective talent; and the following comparative account of his performances with Mr. Mathews's, derived from one of the most competent authorities of the day, is worth perusal.

Mathews and Alexandre.

Every age hath its wonders, and this latter age in that respect is certainly not behind-hand. It is, however, some time since we assumed the happy doctrine of *nil admirari*, &c., or perhaps our admiration might have been tempted to transgress its limits at the admirable powers of Mr. Mathews. We readily conceive, that if anything might justify the transgression, it would be the wonderful combination of talent which centres in that accomplished man.

We are fresh from the enjoyment of a visit to "Mathews at Home," and a soirée passed with the no less (in his way) surprising Mr. Alexandre. We have had much ado to "bridle in our struggling wonderment."

Of course, it is supererogatory to advise one's friends to go and see Mathews; but even the most ardent admirers of his personations and personifications will, we doubt not, derive considerable amusement from the talents of the extraordinary foreigner. The curious, the incredulous, and those who speculate on the possible results of mental and physical powers concentrated in one pursuit, should certainly avail themselves of this exhibition. It is true, he addresses himself almost exclusively to the senses; they will therefore expect but a small portion of that intellectual delight which Mathews so triumphantly diffuses around him; they will, indeed, *learn* no more than the Indian jugglers may have already taught them. The great charm, that of sympathy, by which Mathews leads captive the willing minds of his audience, cordially abandoned to the stream of enjoyment, is in Alexandre necessarily and manifestly wanting; the one receives as much pleasure (we hope so) as he affords: in the other, we cannot wholly divest ourselves of the feeling that we hear a man say his lesson. A great advantage the former possesses over his competitor in that "conversational web," by which he ingratiates himself with his company, gives relief to his entertainment, and comparative repose to himself. Alexandre, from the structure of the drama he enacts, which is by no means deficient in point and humour, and in every way adapted to his peculiar powers, is obliged to keep his faculties upon the stretch from first to last.

The following is a notice of the conclusion of Mr. Mathews's performances this season, with his address to the audience.

Mr. Mathews "At Home."

June 1818.

Mr. Mathews terminated his novel undertaking on the 16th inst. after having for forty nights drawn together what were really "brilliant and crowded audiences;" and this, too, by the sole unaided force of his own abilities. It is impossible to convey to him a higher compliment than to state this simple fact. He has ascertained what must hitherto have been quite unknown to Mr. Arnold, viz. exactly how much his theatre will hold; for never till Mr. Mathews commenced his operations there, did we see it completely filled.

After his imitations Mr. Mathews came forward, and the tumultuous applause with which he was greeted having somewhat subsided, he addressed the audience in the following manner:

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—The only painful part of my exertions now remains, that of bidding you farewell! The great Patent Theatres have so entirely exhausted the language of self-commendation, that they have left me no choice of terms that can express my gratitude for 'overflowing and brilliant audiences,'—'rapturous, unanimous, and unbounded applause,'—'roars of laughter,'—'unqualified approbation,' and 'unprecedented success.' I must therefore content myself with offering in less pompous, but not less sincere phraseology, the humble tribute of heartfelt thanks. Accept, Ladies and Gentlemen, this homely but genuine expression of my feelings, and believe that it will be the proudest recollection of my life, that during the course of forty evenings' entertainments, I have been honoured not only with full houses, but also by your approbation and applause. The question whether I had done wisely in leaving the boards of what are called the regular theatres, and which are sometimes problematical, is now decided, and I may say (without more vanity than your encouragement will fully justify) is decided in my favour. I now, therefore, leave the metropolis with that plentiful harvest which has ripened in the sunshine of your favour. But this I beg to state distinctly, that while I am advised that my performances are within the strict letter of the law, no fear shall deter me from proceeding; and that I will resist strenuously and firmly any measures that may be pursued to support an injurious monopoly to my injury, and that I shall double all the energies of my resistance from the recollection that I am contending in the cause of the public, who have no right to be curtailed of their lawful amusements, or to be told by Patentees, 'If you won't come and laugh with us, we will take care you shall not go and laugh elsewhere.'—That I shall make you laugh again and again I sincerely hope, and though I may choose a merrier subject than Patent Theatres and Monopolies, I do not doubt that I shall have the cordial satisfaction of meeting again next year as many smiling faces as have graced this theatre for the last forty nights that I have had the honour and happiness of receiving you 'At Home.'"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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ERRATA.

VOL. II.

Page 32, l. 18, *for* moment *read* time.
33, l. 29, *delete* publicly.
39, l. 4, *for* mimic power *read* power of personation.
42, l. 4, *for* efforts *read* effects.
79, l. 8, *for* felling him *read* and he fell.
93, l. 7, *read* one or two such drolleries.
97, l. 2, *for* class called *read* class he called.
102, l. 7, *delete* veneration and *read* that which might.
128, l. 3, *for* not more *read* less.
116, l. 14, *for* respectability *read* distinction.
117, l. 1, *ditto.*
118, l. 1, *for* this *read* that.
119, l. 14, *for* respectability *read* reputation.
122, l. 2, *for* concealment *read* self-concealment.
132, l. 3, *for* delighted *read* delightful.
141, l. 14, *for* ready *read* requisite.
166, l. 29, *for* dropped *read* took.
167, l. 29, *delete* sixth time.
173, l. 3, *for* pray *read* pay.
ibid. note to l. 29 *omitted.*—" Business" is the technical word for a good line of characters. The same word is also used in reference to the cash receipts in a theatre.—A. M.
175, l. 1, *for* not one moment *read* not had one moment.
ibid. l. 6, *for* better *read* better in its way.
ibid. l. 30, *for* mumbled *read* mummed.
183, l. 21, *for* ascended obstructed *read* ascended though obstructed.
ibid. l. 31, *for* defaced *read* laid waste.
185, l. 18, *read* him *before* it.
186, l. 28, *for* our *read* one.
208, l. 25, *for* what it had been *read* the thing it was.
211, l. 8, *for* Edinburgh *read* Scotland.
232, l. 19, *for* Mr. Braham's *read* the great vocalist's.
240, l. 30, *for* feelings *read* feeling.
245, l. 20, *for* when *read* where.
255, l. 8, *for* Mr. Mathews *read* he.
ibid. l. 15, *for* it sets *read* it is curious in itself, and sets.
264, l. 2, *for* one small room *read* one of the rooms.
278, l. 20, *for* Verter Liquor *read* Venter Loquor.
288, l. 14, *delete* out of London.
292, *last line, delete* bad.
314, l. 1, *for* Mathews's *read* Mathews.
ibid. l. 3, *for* Carlisle *read* Comedy.
ibid. note, for farce *read* comedy.
318, l. 3 and 4, *for* showed itself *read* rose to the surface.
334, l. 31, *for* directed *read* erected.
339, l. 25, *for* delirious *read* delicious.
387, l. 3, *for* in the *read* in one of the.
416, l. 8, *for* Anderson *read* Andrew.

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